



Special Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Date **Tuesday 23 July 2019**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber - County Hall, Durham**

Business

Part A

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's
agreement.**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interest
4. A Vision for County Durham 2035 - Report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships (Pages 3 - 32)
5. Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities - Report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships (Pages 33 - 96)
6. County Durham Partnership update - Report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships (Pages 97 - 126)
7. Year End 2018/19 Customer Feedback - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 127 - 186)
8. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
15 July 2019

To: **The Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

Councillor R Crute (Chair)
Councillor A Batey (Vice-Chair)

Councillors E Adam, R Bell, D Boyes, J Chaplow, M Clarke, A Hopgood,
P Jopling, B Kellett, H Liddle, L Maddison, J Makepeace, R Manchester,
C Martin, O Milburn, C Potts, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, A Savory,
A Shield, H Smith, F Tinsley, J Turnbull, M Wilkes and A Willis

Contact: Jackie Graham

Email: 03000 269704

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

23 July 2019

County Durham Vision 2035



Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the proposed new County Durham Vision to overview and scrutiny members as part of the final third phase of the consultation process.

Executive summary

2. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held a workshop for all overview and scrutiny members in January this year to consider emerging findings for a new County Durham Vision.
3. The emerging findings document and draft ambitions were produced following an analysis of performance data, feedback from consultations and emerging policy developments.
4. Comments from the workshop were fed back and following further consultation and feedback a proposed new vision for County Durham has been developed.

Recommendation(s)

5. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are asked to:
 - a) Note and comment upon the proposed new County Durham Vision presentation and video.

Background

6. The County Durham Partnership agreed to refresh their vision for County Durham on 10 October 2018. A three-phase consultation was

agreed, with the first phase involving a review of existing consultation evidence and additional focus groups, incorporating over 24,000 individual responses.

7. An emerging findings document with draft ambitions was then produced and used as the basis for a second phase of public consultation between November 2018 – January 2019. This exercise included:
 - a) An online survey on the county council website (215 responses received)
 - b) 23 focus groups (250 community attendees)
 - c) 21 partnership meetings and forums
8. Both the emerging findings and feedback from the above consultation responses have been used to further shape the proposed vision for County Durham (attached as Appendix 2).

Background papers

Refreshing the County's Vision - Emerging Findings

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/26553/Durham-2030-a-vision-for-our-future/pdf/Durham2030-AVisionForOurFuture.pdf?m=636789245733670000>

Contact: Jenny Haworth

Tel: 03000 268171

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

Corporate, service and financial planning are part of an integrated process. Ambitions will influence future resource allocation.

Consultation

This report forms part of the final consultation phase on the County Durham Vision.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equalities issues have been considered in the development of the proposed ambitions and objectives within the draft vision document.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

Crime and disorder issues have been considered in the development of the proposed ambitions and objectives within the draft vision document.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

Major risks have been considered in the development of the proposed ambitions and objectives in the draft vision document.

Procurement

None.

Climate Emergency

Climate change issues have been considered in the development of the proposed ambitions and objectives within the draft vision document.

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A vision for County Durham

2019 - 2035



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County Durham in 2035

The purpose of this proposed vision is to provide a shared understanding of what everyone wants County Durham to look like in 15 years' time. It is to provide direction to key public, private and voluntary sector organisations that make up the County Durham Partnership enabling them to work together to improve the quality of life of our residents. A shared understanding of the issues we face and our vision for the future will help organisations work together, removing boundaries and co-delivering services for the benefit of our residents.

County Durham is a forward thinking area with a strong sense of community. Our friendly people, fascinating history and beautiful natural environment, from the dales to the coast, are what makes our county great. We have rebuilt and reinvented our economy and communities to overcome past challenges. We are passionate about building a better future for all and forming a new relationship between the County Durham Partnership and everyone who lives in, works in or visits our county.

County Durham is well-connected and welcoming, and a centre for innovative business and manufacturing. Our distinct identity and sense of community offers something different for people and businesses. The county has fast and reliable links by road, rail and air to the rest of the country and internationally. We are a skilled and dynamic area which develops ideas and products that support progress across the county, the North East and beyond.

Our vision is powered by people. It builds on our strengths and opportunities whilst recognising our challenges. It sums up our optimism and ambitions for the future. It feels real and is owned by the people of County Durham. It is an ambitious vision. We do not profess to have all the answers. In some cases, it will mean us having to develop new and innovative solutions, together with our communities, in order to progress and achieve the level of improvement we want for our residents.

It is forward-looking and is aligned to our spatial plan: the County Durham Plan.

Durham: Powered by People

We have listened closely to local communities and partners to develop this vision, underpinned by a series of objectives, to reflect the voices of the people of Durham.

We want to work together with the people of County Durham to help shape our communities and provide help to those who need it. We recognise that achieving a vision is beyond the grasp of any one organisation. In times when resources are scarce, it is important to collaborate. History has taught us that the best outcomes are always achieved when

we work together with communities to achieve our goals. We believe that the future is bright for Durham. Together, we can tackle the challenges that we face more effectively and through harnessing the potential of the people who live in County Durham, we can achieve great things together.

We have developed a vision and three strategic ambitions to develop County Durham over the next 15 years.

Vision statement

Our proposed vision for 2035 is that County Durham is a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.

More and better jobs

Our young people will achieve their full potential by having access to good quality education and training to prepare them for employment. We will work together to help them find rewarding work and reduce the number of people living in poverty.

We will help people to create more and better jobs by developing major employment sites across the county to build a strong, competitive and lower carbon economy, establishing the county as a premier place in the North East to do business.

We will build on our successful tourist economy through culture-led regeneration to broaden the leisure experience for residents and visitors to the county. Our visitor experience will compete with the best offered by other comparable destinations.

People live long and independent lives

Our children and young people will have the best start in life and enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing. We will work with families to make sure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can achieve the best possible outcomes.

We will design the physical environment to give people greater opportunity for exercise, and to cycle and walk more for everyday journeys. We will reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impact of climate change on people's lives.

We will promote positive healthy behaviours and help people to stop smoking. We will tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health, build more resilient communities and promote positive mental health.

People will be able to live independently for longer. We will further integrate the work of health and social care organisations to improve the lives of people receiving these services. We will also deliver more housing to meet the needs of older people.

We will work to tackle health inequality across the county and close the gap in healthy life expectancy between our communities.

Connected communities

We will deliver new high-quality housing in a range of house types and tenures including affordable homes that are accessible and meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

Properties in our communities will be well used. We will work with owners to help bring more empty homes back into use and ensure that privately rented homes are well managed.

Our town and village centres will be well used, clean, attractive and safe.

Our transport network will support cycling and walking and provide good access to workplaces, retail and leisure opportunities and will be relatively free from congestion. Widespread use of electric vehicles will reduce noise and improve air quality.

We want our communities to remain welcoming, accept one another and build new relationships to support each other. Children will have a safe childhood and victims of crime will have easy access to the services and support that they require.

Consultation feedback

This proposed vision has been built on an extensive public consultation. Residents, businesses and specific groups, such as people with a disability and children and young people, were asked what they would like to see in a new vision for County Durham. A separate consultation report details the results from this exercise. A summary is below.

Main areas highlighted during consultation



People wanted to see a thriving economy in County Durham with more and better jobs for everyone.



Residents were rightly proud of the history and heritage of the county and its beautiful countryside. They felt that the county could be further developed as a place for tourists and residents to visit, stay and return to.



There is a strong sense of community spirit in County Durham. People wanted to build on this and ensure that people support each other within their own communities.



Everyone wanted County Durham to continue to be a great place to grow up. This involves making sure children are safe, healthy and have access to good education so that they are well placed to access jobs.



Local people highlighted the importance of people helping themselves and adopting healthy behaviours to keep themselves fitter for longer. Residents were also concerned about mental health problems in some communities.



Transport is a key issue across the county. It should support a thriving economy and ensure that our towns and villages are vibrant and well used.



People wanted to see a range of good quality housing that meets our future needs. The need for more affordable housing, including good quality rented accommodation and more specialist housing to suit the requirements of older and vulnerable people, was also highlighted.



There was a recognition amongst those consulted that the growth in online shopping in recent years is leading to store closures in our high streets and that this is a national problem. We need to think more innovatively around mixed uses for our high streets and town centres and initiatives to make them more vibrant and well used.

The symbols used here are reflected throughout this document and show how these priorities are being addressed.

Our ambition is to continue with the economic renaissance of the county. By 2035, our aim is for County Durham to enjoy a thriving economy with more and better jobs, better employment opportunities for all and reduced levels of poverty and deprivation.

We will build on our existing portfolio of businesses specialising in leisure and tourism, green technologies, creative industries, financial services, pharmaceuticals and advanced engineering and technologies. We will support a low carbon economy, encouraging the use of low carbon technologies and renewable energy sources.

County Durham has some of the most beautiful countryside and coastal landscapes in Britain, a fascinating history, a wealth of attractions and regular events programme. Over the last 10 years, great strides have been made to improve our tourist economy. Our aim is to have County Durham recognised nationally and internationally as a leading centre for culture, with a range of experiences that match and exceed the best offered by England's premier destinations.

A number of our villages were developed around collieries and homes were built to house the population boom at the peak of coal production. These communities have suffered a decline following the demise of these industries.

We want to work with these communities to address the underlying causes of deprivation and socio-economic inequality.

Six specific objectives will help us to achieve more and better jobs across the whole county. These objectives have been developed following consultation with the public and our partners.



1.1 We will deliver a range of accessible employment sites across the county

New and expanded employment sites across the county which are accessible to our labour market will attract new employers, allow expansion of existing businesses and respond to the changing needs of the business sector. These sites will be located in areas of the county that offer good opportunities to attract investment, in line with the County Durham Plan (the spatial plan for the county).



1.2 We will have a strong, competitive economy and County Durham will be a premier place in the North East to do business

Our aim is to bridge the gap between the economic performance of County Durham, initially with that of other parts of the North East and following this, the rest of England. This will be achieved by creating and sustaining employment, improving productivity and competitiveness of our businesses. We will build on the growth over the last 10 years in green technologies, creative industries, financial services, pharmaceuticals and advanced engineering sectors. We will continue to work in partnership with the government to explore opportunities for more local control by devolving housing, transport and planning powers and funding. We will continue with the rollout of superfast broadband to stimulate growth in our economy and open up new economic sectors. Our plans will support rural growth whilst preserving the quality of what makes these areas distinctive.



1.3 We will broaden the experience for residents and visitors to the county

We will protect and enhance our core heritage and natural assets and provide a programme of cultural and sporting events to promote the whole county. We will support and enhance visitor accommodation, towns and villages and we will improve the quality of visitors' post-arrival experience by developing green, visitor-friendly transport options connecting the county's main visitor attractions.



1.4 Young people will have access to good quality education, training and employment

We will strive to ensure that children and young people achieve the best possible education and will pay particular attention to improving the educational attainment of vulnerable children and young people. We will reduce inequality in educational outcomes across the county and support young people to gain the necessary qualifications, skills and experience to progress into sustained employment.



1.5 We will focus our efforts on helping all people into rewarding work

We will increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities across the county, particularly within growth and labour intensive sectors. We will increase employment of young people, older people, vulnerable and disadvantaged people by creating and building pathways to help them into education, training and employment.



1.6 Fewer people will be affected by poverty and deprivation in the county

We will work to continue our economic renaissance in the county and help regenerate areas suffering high levels of deprivation. We will work with communities to help to tackle the impact of welfare reform and support individuals and families affected by these changes. We will also develop programmes of work to build stronger families and support workless households.

People will have long and independent lives

Good health is central to people's happiness and has a significant impact on the economy. Health is determined by several factors, many of which are not based on an individual's behaviour or choice but are a consequence of where they live, their environment, access to a good natural and built environment, high quality education and jobs, and a supportive network of friends and family.

Seven specific objectives will help support people to have long and independent lives. These objectives have been developed following consultation with the public and other interested parties.



2.1 Children and young people will enjoy the best possible start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing

Childhood is the springboard to a successful adulthood. It is the foundation on which our lives are built. We will provide the best support to expectant mothers, mothers of new born babies and older children, as well as high quality nursery and primary education. We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people and help children and their families achieve and maintain their optimum mental health and wellbeing.



2.2 Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes

We will secure high-quality support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families, and ensure that they are well prepared for adult life and can live independently.



2.3 We will create a physical environment that will contribute to good health

We will maximise the quality of our local environment and clean air with opportunities to be physically active and achieve a healthy weight. We will reduce our carbon emissions and mitigate against the impact of climate change on our residents and communities. We will encourage transport choices that are the most sustainable by improving the attractiveness of these modes of transport including cycling and walking for everyday journeys.



2.4 We will promote positive behaviours

We will create a smoke-free county for our residents. We would like our children to have a future free from harm due to drug and alcohol misuse.



2.5 We will tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities

County Durham will be a county where mental health is seen as equal to physical health and where discrimination relating to mental health issues is challenged. We will implement a programme called 'Mental Health at Scale' where we will tackle the stigma and discrimination of mental health focusing on young people, the workplace and the community to build more resilient communities and promote positive mental health.



2.6 Better integration of health and social care services

Our residents will be able to live independently for longer with support from a more integrated health and social care system. We will ensure that health underpins all public sector policies and plans so we can make better connections between health, employment, housing, education and community safety.



2.7 People will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more homes to meet the needs of older and disabled people

The number and proportion of older and disabled people is forecast to increase in the future. We will develop housing and care options specifically to meet the needs of the older and disabled people within our communities. This will include building appropriate types of housing and ensuring the provision of appropriate care and support.

Our residents are rightly proud of their heritage and values. We want to have a caring and welcoming county where everyone is valued, where we can help each other and we support our vulnerable people. We want communities that give everyone the opportunity to realise their potential. We also recognise that communities are not just geographical. Social networks can be an important part of people's lives and be a force for good, reducing social isolation, providing a sense of belonging and playing a big role in building communities and catalysing neighbourhood cooperation and social action.

A range and choice of housing which is accessible, well designed and meets our future needs is key to the sustainability of our communities. This should include an appropriate level of affordable housing, a good standard of rented property and an increased range of new housing options. Our housing will be energy efficient for increased comfort and reduced running costs.

Many high streets across the country are facing a range of challenges including the growth of online retail and changes in consumer behaviour. High streets and town centres retain an important place in our society, but they need to adapt to ensure that they remain vibrant, safe and attractive social hubs that people want to use.

People also expect local travel to be convenient, with good quality direct links to major town centres, employment locations such as business parks and leisure opportunities. If we are to enjoy connected communities then they must be connected by an appropriate transport infrastructure.

Seven specific objectives have been developed to improve our communities in County Durham.



3.1 All children and young people will have a safe childhood

We will protect and support children and young people in need and make sure that they are safe. Social work practice and other support services to vulnerable children will be improved. We will provide excellent care for looked after children and care leavers and provide support to young offenders and young victims of crime.



3.2 Victims of crime will have access to the right level of support, with services available to address their needs

Victims of crime are often vulnerable people. Some suffer from poor mental health. Being a victim of a crime can also make you more vulnerable. All victims will be offered support to cope and recover from their ordeal at all stages and to engage in the justice system.



3.3 Standards will be maintained or improved across County Durham's housing stock

We will work with communities most affected by long-term empty properties, including owners and landlords to bring these homes back into use. An approach to selective licensing of private landlords will be developed to provide further powers to intervene where landlords are operating poor management practices and tenants are living in unsatisfactory conditions. The design of new development in rural areas will be sympathetic to the natural, built and historic environment and reflect local distinctiveness. More affordable low carbon homes will be delivered through a combination of housing for sale or rent, including housing that provides a subsidised route into home ownership. This issue is particularly acute in some of our rural areas.



3.4 Our towns and villages will be vibrant, well used, clean, attractive and safe

We will work together and take appropriate action to ensure that our town and village centres are well used for a range of purposes including retail, commercial, leisure, residential, cultural and service uses. Our towns and villages will be an attractive proposition to visit and spend time in. All generations will feel that they enjoy visiting them and will feel safe. Residents will be proud of the towns and villages that they live in and improvements will lead to a better quality of life.



3.5 People will have good access to workplaces, services, retail and leisure opportunities

We want a transport system that supports a thriving economy. People need access to employment in the region, places to shop and key services such as education, hospitals and leisure opportunities. Our transport network should be reliable, with buses and trains running on time and traffic congestion at a minimum. Large volumes of standing traffic in Durham City make it less attractive to visitors and residents and impact on air quality and health. We will consider further traffic interventions to boost our economy and to reduce congestion.



3.6 Communities will come together to accept and support each other

We will work together to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour adversely affecting our communities and to address the underlying causes of crime and community tensions. We will actively take steps to encourage community cohesion and mark specific events which encourage greater understanding of each other to promote good relationships. We want to work with communities to solve problems together and develop local solutions that will work.



3.7 We will deliver new high-quality housing which is accessible and meets the needs and aspirations of our residents

Our county needs to have housing with a range of house types and tenures which are in the right place and that meet the needs of all of our residents.

This vision document will replace the current Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham and will commence in 2019. A high-level action plan detailing the major changes that we want to make will be developed, together with a set of key performance indicators which will be used by the County Durham Partnership to monitor progress and measure success in achieving our vision.

We will deliver this vision together with our communities. We will operate to the following principles of working in order to improve the wellbeing of our residents:

- Solutions will be designed and produced together with service users.
- We will work with communities and support their development and empowerment.
- We will acknowledge the differing needs of our communities whilst acknowledging and building on their potential strengths.
- We will direct our activities where they can make the biggest difference to those who are most vulnerable and help to build resilience.
- We will tailor support to each individual's needs, ensuring they feel empowered and are not stigmatised.
- We will align our related strategies, policies and services to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact.

A vision for County Durham

County Durham Vision 2035



A vision for County Durham

Why do we need to change?

- Our vision has served us well until now
- Many long-term aspirations have been achieved or are being implemented
- The world has changed since 2009

A vision for County Durham

Building on our success

Employment increased from 64.6% (2010) to 74.6%



Strong growth in visitor economy (£627m 2008 to £891m in 2017)



Our future is Durham

County Durham Partnership

A vision for County Durham

Building on our success

Carbon emissions reduced by over 52% in the last 10 years



Less than 5% of household refuse collected now goes to landfill (60% 10 years ago)



Our future is Durham

County Durham Partnership

A vision for County Durham

Building on our success

Life expectancy improving
(increase of 3.4 years for men
and 2.1 years for women since
2000)



Tobacco smoking down from
22% in 2012 to 14% (UK levels)



Teenage conceptions more than
halved in last five years



Older people living in their own
homes for longer



A vision for County Durham

Building on our success

Area Action Partnerships

- Over the last 10 years, over 6,000 community projects
- Benefiting over 30,000 people
- Securing over £100m funding



30,454 volunteers across all sectors in County Durham over two year period



A vision for County Durham

Partners Recognised



Durham Constabulary rated as outstanding for the fourth year in a row

CDDFRS winners of UK fire and rescue service of the year



Both North Durham and DDES CCG rated as Good

University of Durham ranked in top 10 UK universities and top 100 worldwide



A vision for County Durham

But still a way to go



A vision for County Durham

Consultation so far



AAPs and Partnerships



Children and Young People



Special Interest Groups



The Durham Message Wall



Councillors

A vision for County Durham

What you told us was important



Economy

- ♻️ Accessible employment sites
- ♻️ A thriving and lower carbon economy
- ♻️ Helping people into work



Children and Young People

- ♻️ Best start in life and good health
- ♻️ Good education, training and employment
- ♻️ Safe childhood
- ♻️ Best possible outcomes for those with SEND



Health and Wellbeing

- ♥️ An healthy environment inc. tackling climate change
- ♥️ Promote positive behaviours
- ♥️ Tackle mental health
- ♥️ Better integration of health and social care



Tourism

- ♻️ Broadened offer to visitors and residents



Housing

- ♻️ Good quality new housing
- ♻️ Improved existing housing
- ♻️ Housing for older people



Towns and Villages

- ♻️ Vibrant, attractive, safe



Communities

- ♻️ Support and accept
- ♻️ Deprivation and poverty
- ♻️ Support victims of crime



Transport

- ♻️ Good access

A vision for County Durham

Our proposed ambitions and objectives

More and Better Jobs

- ✦ Accessible employment sites
- ✦ A competitive lower carbon economy
- ✦ Helping people into work
- 🏠 Broadened offer to visitors and residents
- ✦ Good education, training and employment
- ✦ Deprivation and poverty

Long and Independent Lives

- ✦ Best start in life and good health
- ✦ Best possible outcomes for those with SEND
- ♥ Environment that is good for health and climate
- ♥ Promote positive behaviours
- ♥ Tackle mental health
- ♥ Better integration of health and social care
- 🏠 Housing for older people

Connected Communities

- 🏠 Good quality new housing
- 🏠 Improved existing housing
- 🏠 Vibrant, attractive, safe
- ✦ Support and accept
- ✦ Support victims of crime
- 🚗 Good access
- ✦ Safe childhood

A vision for County Durham

Our Vision

Our vision for 2035 is that County Durham is a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.



A vision for County Durham

Thank you for listening

1. Do you agree that our vision strikes the right balance of priorities and ambitions for the county?
Tell us what you think
2. We all need to work together to achieve our aspirations
How can we work together to achieve this?



**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

23 July 2019



**Statutory Guidance on Overview and
Scrutiny in Local and Combined
Authorities**

Ordinary Decision

Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide information on the new statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny in local and combined authorities published on 7 May 2019 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and consider the Council's response.

Executive summary

- 2 The guidance provides advice for senior leaders, members of overview and scrutiny committees and support officers.
- 3 It recognises that authorities approach scrutiny in different ways and what might work for one authority might not work well for another.
- 4 As statutory guidance, local authorities must have regard to it in exercising their overview and scrutiny functions. The government states the guidance is not expected to be followed in every detail however it should be followed and if it is decided not to, a good reason should be demonstrated.
- 5 Durham County Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements are already robust and effective. An analysis of the new guidance has demonstrated that we already incorporate much that is recommended, and this is reflected in the delivery of excellent scrutiny work.

- 6 A summary of recommendations for action is set out in paragraph 19 and the proposed next steps in paragraph 22.
- 7 Appendix 2 provides more details, setting out an assessment of how the council is positioned against all points of the new guidance. It includes recommendations for action and, where no action is recommended, reasons for this. These have been developed following advice from chairs and vice chairs of scrutiny committees.

Recommendation(s)

- 8 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is recommended to:
 - (a) Consider and comment on the new guidance;
 - (b) Consider and comment upon the recommendations for action as set out in paragraph 19 below;
 - (c) Note that a report will be submitted to the Constitution Working Group following the completion of any work required as set out in paragraph 22 (c).

Background

- 9 The House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees was published in 2018. The government responded to the Select Committee formally, undertaking to consult on new guidance. Following roundtable discussions with stakeholders and submissions from 30 local authorities including Durham County Council, new guidance has been recently published.
- 10 The guidance states that effective overview and scrutiny should:
 - Provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge;
 - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
 - Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role;
 - Drive improvement in public services.
- 11 These four principles, originally developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, are embedded within the Council’s overview and scrutiny function. They are already reflected in the Council’s acknowledged model of good practice, recognised in the MJ award in 2016 for Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny.
- 12 The guidance covers the following six areas – culture, resourcing, selecting committee members, power to access information, planning

work and evidence sessions. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the Council's current arrangements against these six areas.

13 Culture

- Members of Durham County Council lead the overview and scrutiny process by developing comprehensive work programmes which reflect the issues which are important to County Durham and its communities. Scrutiny contributes to policy development and performance improvement through their review activity. This ownership of the work programme and strong organisational culture underpins scrutiny's legitimacy as an effective and strategic function.

14 Resourcing

- Scrutiny is effectively resourced within the Council which leads to successful engagement with officers from the council and with our partners. The Council has a dedicated scrutiny support team and good support from democratic services, and senior and specialist officers across all services. This is key to scrutiny adding value to the work of the council.

15 Selecting Committee Members

- The Council's constitution requires that committee chairs and members are appointed each year at the annual council meeting. This requirement reflects the principles of transparency and accountability which form part of our Code of Conduct for members. Role descriptors have been in place for some time to assist with selecting chairs and members and it would be timely to review these.

16 Power to Access Information

- The Council's experienced overview and scrutiny team have been very successful in accessing the information required for effective scrutiny within the Council, and through engaging with external partners, organisations and local academics. Those committees with statutory powers to access external information have a good track record of effective scrutiny e.g. the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been effective in influencing decisions around planned changes to Ward 6 at Bishop Auckland Hospital.

17 Planning Work

- The process for developing the Council’s overview and scrutiny work programmes is consultative and comprehensive. Initial proposals are influenced by legislation, plans and strategies, performance reports and include engagement with the executive, partners and officers. Each overview and scrutiny committee has an experienced chair to ensure there is a clear focus on the committee’s role and forward plan of work. Where there are any cross-cutting matters, joint meetings are held to avoid duplication and make the best use of capacity of both members and officers.

18 Evidence Sessions

- The Council received an Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny award in 2016 which acknowledged our overview and scrutiny function as a model of best practice. We continue to ensure that our community engagement, consultation and governance arrangements are strong and thorough.

19 The areas highlighted for the Council to consider for action in response to the guidance are summarised below:

New guidance	Recommendation/Action
How to establish a strong organisational culture (Appendix 2 Item 1)	It is proposed that no changes are required although consideration be given to offering training to officers attending and providing information for scrutiny meetings.
Managing disagreement (Appendix 2 Item 5)	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required in terms of an executive and scrutiny protocol, however consideration be given to the value of developing a protocol which could be used in a wider context with partners.
Communicating scrutiny’s role and purpose to the wider authority (Appendix 2 Item 8)	The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to review the scrutiny reporting procedures in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to determine whether any further changes to arrangements should be considered.
Maintaining the interest of full council	The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to review the scrutiny reporting procedures to Council in consultation with the Monitoring Officer.

New guidance	Recommendation/Action
in the work of the scrutiny committee (Appendix 2 Item 9)	The review to consider the inclusion of a quarterly update from overview and scrutiny to council in addition to the current annual report. Consideration be given to either including the minutes of NECA Scrutiny meetings on the COSMB agendas or expanding the content of the Chairs Update to COSMB.
Selecting Committee Members (Appendix 2 Item 13)	It is proposed the role descriptors for members be reviewed to reflect the requirements of the new guidance.
Selecting a Chair (Appendix 2 Item 14)	It is proposed the role descriptors for committee chairs be reviewed to reflect the requirements of the new guidance.
Planning work (Appendix 2 Item 19)	Consideration could be given to reporting all the thematic overview and scrutiny committee work programmes to COSMB to provide oversight and co-ordination of scrutiny work.
Information sources (Appendix 2 Item 23)	It is proposed that the information highlighted in para 54 of the guidance regarding information sources routinely provided to scrutiny committees be reviewed periodically.

20 Appendix 2 provides extracts and summarises the main points in the guidance, the current practice in Durham County Council and any areas which may need further consideration. It also sets out reasons why no further action is proposed in response to the advice in the guidance on various issues.

21 Appendix 3 contains the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities.

Next Steps

22 The process for consideration of the new guidance is as follows:

- a) Initial discussions have taken place with the Constitution Working Group on 8 July 2019 on the engagement process to be undertaken with overview and scrutiny members.
- b) A special meeting of COSMB held on 23 July 2019 to discuss the implications of the new guidance and recommend areas for further consideration.
- c) Officers work up any suggestions requiring further consideration and highlight any implications which may result in a change to process.
- d) A report be submitted to the Constitution Working Group setting out any proposed constitutional and procedural changes.
- e) The report be then submitted to Cabinet prior to submission to Council to agree any changes to the constitution.

Background papers

- Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

Contact:	Jenny Haworth	Tel: 03000 268 071
	Clare Luery	Tel: 03000 265 978

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The council has a statutory duty to adopt and maintain a constitution pursuant to s37 of the Local Government Act 2000. As set out in paragraph 4 of the report, the Council must have regard to the statutory guidance when determining its scrutiny arrangements and have good reasons for not following any aspects of the guidance.

Finance

There are no financial implications.

Consultation

As set out in the report, it is proposed that consultation with the scrutiny function take place through a special meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. The appropriate officers, including the monitoring officer will continue to be consulted regarding any amendments to the constitution which are relevant to them.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None specific within this report.

Human Rights

None specific within this report.

Crime and Disorder

None specific within this report.

Staffing

None specific within this report.

Accommodation

None specific within this report.

Risk

None specific within this report.

Procurement

As set out in the report in relation to any changes to procurement arrangements.

Appendix 2: Extract and Summary - Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

Attached as a separate document

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		Culture		
1.	Para 11 Page 8	<p>How to establish a strong organisational culture by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Recognising scrutiny’s legal and democratic legitimacy. - All members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. 	<p>Durham County Council’s overview and scrutiny function embeds the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s established principles of good scrutiny within its constitution (Article 5 and Part 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules)</p> <p>All scrutiny members at DCC receive training on their role and responsibilities as part of the overview and scrutiny function.</p> <p>Training for officers on the overview and scrutiny function could be offered to new members of staff or those new to their posts who would be providing information to and attending scrutiny meetings.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes are required although consideration be given to offering training to officers attending and providing information for scrutiny meetings.</p>
2.	Para 11 Page 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Identifying a clear role and focus - Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. 	<p>There is a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function at DCC and this is set out in the constitution.</p> <p>The terms of reference for overview and scrutiny are contained within Part 1 Article 5 of the council’s constitution. The terms of reference for the audit committee are in Part 4 Financial Procedure Rules.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
3.	Para 11 Page 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications. 	<p>DCC has a Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing) in place – the Chief Internal Auditor owns the process on behalf of the Corporate Director of Resources.</p> <p>The Audit Committee has responsibility for the overview of the Council’s Confidential Reporting Code. (Article 4 C (xx))</p> <p>Currently, any wider implications of an investigation under the Confidential Reporting Code would be addressed by the appropriate forum.</p>	It is proposed that no changes are required.
4.	Para 11 Page 9	<p>c) Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. - The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member’s participation in a scrutiny committee meeting. 	<p>DCC’s constitution (Article 5) includes requirements for appropriate liaison with COSMB and the executive in the interests of achieving common aims and continuous improvement for the council.</p> <p>Cabinet members and senior officers attend overview and scrutiny committees to provide information as part of policy development and review and also to respond to concerns expressed by scrutiny in respect of service delivery issues.</p> <p>The informal arrangements work well with shared dialogue at regular executive and non-executive meetings.</p>	It is proposed that no changes are required as the guidance is in line with our current approach.

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
5.	Para 11 Page 9	<p>d) Managing disagreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of (disagreement) and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement. - Scrutiny committees have the power to ‘call in’ decisions should not view as a party-political tool. 	<p>Informal arrangements are in place at DCC and work well e.g. executive and non-executive meetings.</p> <p>The Constitution Working Group is a cross party group which meets regularly and provides opportunities for discussion.</p> <p>DCC have utilised the call-in procedure infrequently.</p> <p>Initial work to consider a protocol for working with partners including health is taking place, although to date existing arrangements to work with partners have generally been seen as effective.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required in terms of an executive and scrutiny protocol however consideration be given to the value of developing a protocol which could be used in a wider context with partners.</p>
6.	Para 11 Page 10	<p>e) Providing the necessary support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of resource allocated to scrutiny. - Support given by members and senior officers. 	<p>The council’s overview and scrutiny function continues to receive acknowledgement as a model of best practice with Durham receiving the Municipal Journal’s Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny award in 2016 for its approach to scrutiny, community engagement and consultation and governance arrangements.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>
7.	Para 11 Page 10	<p>f) Ensuring impartial advice from officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roles played by ‘statutory officers’ – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid 	<p>DCC overview and scrutiny function has good working arrangements in place with the relevant statutory officers.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 44		<p>service, and the statutory scrutiny officer have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.</p>		
8.	Para 11 Page 10	<p>g) Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities should take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support. 	<p>An overview and scrutiny annual report is submitted to council each year setting out the work undertaken in the past year and giving detail of work to be carried out in the coming year. The report contains information of the impact of scrutiny reviews and recommendations made. (Article 5 5.03 (d))</p> <p>The annual report is circulated widely and contains details of the officers providing support to the function.</p> <p>Overview and scrutiny is featured on DCC's website with links to individual committees, membership and latest reviews. (www.durham.gov.uk/scrutiny)</p> <p>A scrutiny handbook is also produced and is widely available.</p>	<p>The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to review the scrutiny reporting procedures in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to determine whether any further changes to arrangements should be considered.</p>
9.	Para 11 Page 10/11	<p>h) Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities should take steps to ensure full council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing. 	<p>Durham County Council's overview and scrutiny review reports are currently reported via the council's Cabinet. Responses to review recommendations and six-monthly updates to review recommendations are considered by overview and scrutiny committees. The overview</p>	<p>The Statutory Scrutiny Officer to review the scrutiny reporting procedures to council in</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This can be done by reports and recommendations being submitted to full council rather than just Cabinet - The business of scrutiny should be reported to the Combined Authority board or to the chairs of the relevant scrutiny committees of constituent and non-constituent authorities, or both. 	<p>and scrutiny function reports annually to full council on its work during the year and on proposals for work programme development.</p> <p>A more regular report could be submitted to council setting out the breadth of work that is undertaken by overview and scrutiny members. It is suggested this could be done on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>DCC have representatives on both the NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the NECA and North of Tyne CA Joint Transport Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Reference is made to the agendas of both these regional committees on the Chairs Update submitted to meetings of COSMB.</p> <p>Any changes in reporting processes to council will be subject to the council's procedures as set out in the constitution. (Article 5 5.03 (d))</p>	<p>consultation with the Monitoring Officer. The review to consider the inclusion of a quarterly update from overview and scrutiny to council in addition to the current annual report.</p> <p>Consideration be given to including either the minutes of NECA scrutiny meetings on the COSMB agendas or expanding the content of the Chairs Update to COSMB.</p>
10.	Para 11 Page 11	<p>i) Communicating scrutiny's role to the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, 	<p>The scrutiny team works with colleagues in Communications to identify any matters within the work programme which may be of particular interest such as reports to Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on potential changes to hospital services etc. These arrangements are working well.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 46		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This will require engagement early on in the work programming process. 	<p>Twitter is the main focus for publicising meetings of scrutiny committees. Data shows that in the past year tweets relating to scrutiny have received 87,764 views. (@DurhamCouncil)</p> <p>Scrutiny has welcomed the introduction of Local Democracy reporters who are in attendance at most scrutiny meetings. The coverage of scrutiny meetings has increased which has raised the public profile of scrutiny and for specific issues increased public participation in the scrutiny process.</p>	
11.	Para 11 Page 11	<p>j) Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An independent mindset is fundamental to carrying out work effectively. - Requires scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them. 	<p>All scrutiny members at DCC receive training on their role and responsibilities as part of the overview and scrutiny function.</p> <p>The member development programme is currently being updated and training specific to the role of chairs and deputy chairs is included.</p> <p>The chair and vice chairs work with officers to review the work programme each year.</p>	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.
		Resourcing		
12.	Pages 13/14	Resources allocated to the scrutiny function play a pivotal role in	During unprecedented levels of austerity, the level of investment by the council in its overview	It is proposed that no changes to the

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<p>determining how successful that function is and the value it can add to the work of the authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective support is also about the ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function. - Effectively-resourced scrutiny <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o adds value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people. o helps policy formulation and so minimises the need for call-in of executive decisions. - Authorities should ensure that, officers providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. 	<p>and scrutiny function, as detailed within the latest CIPFA benchmarking information shows that DCC continues to spend at the higher end of local authorities on its scrutiny function.</p> <p>DCC has a dedicated overview and scrutiny team within the Transformation and Partnerships directorate which sits under the leadership of the Head of Strategy. The officer resources model uses a mix of specialist officers dedicated to scrutiny, integrated officers drawn from the corporate centre, committee officers and specialist officers who also support the executive drawn from specific policy or service areas.</p> <p>Members have access to reports from a wide range of officers both within the council and external partners at Chief Executive, Director, Head of Service and manager level.</p> <p>The council’s Statutory Scrutiny Officer is the Head of Strategy, Transformation and Partnerships, Jenny Haworth. (Article 9 9.04 (a)-(d))</p> <p>Regular reviews of overview and scrutiny are undertaken and reports submitted as part of the council’s existing governance arrangements where improvements to overview and scrutiny are identified.</p>	<p>current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 48			Following the 2017 local government elections an induction programme for councillors was delivered which included bespoke training for members in respect of overview and scrutiny. Changes to arrangements for the appointment of both statutory voting and non-voting co-optees have been developed to ensure that public involvement in scrutiny is robust.	
		Selecting Committee Members		
13.	Paras 27/28/29 Pages 15/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions. - Authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links (see also paragraph 31), between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa. - When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, 	<p>It is a function of full council to decide at the annual meeting which committees to establish, their size, terms of reference and allocation of seats in accordance with the political balance rules. (Article 4 4.02 (e) and Council Procedure Rules 1.2 (a) – (c).The overview and scrutiny committees at DCC have cross party membership</p> <p>DCC does not allow members of the executive or executive support members to participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses. (Article 5, 5.01)</p> <p>The political groups pay due regard to the requirements for selecting committee members in the informal processes they currently utilise. Role descriptors are available to assist in selecting members.</p>	<p>It is proposed the role descriptors for members be reviewed to reflect the requirements of the new guidance.</p> <p>It is proposed that, subject to the above, no changes to the current arrangements to the selection of committee members are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<p>interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities should not take into account a member’s perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party. 	<p>The council agreed the role descriptors for members serving in a variety of capacities on council committees including Cabinet members, non-executive/scrutiny committee members, Regulatory Committee (Planning and Licensing) members and Audit Committee members. These are linked to the key qualities required for each unique role. It would be appropriate to review these descriptors in view of the new guidance.</p> <p>The code of conduct for members forms part of the constitution which sets out the conduct all members are expected to follow. This includes the registration of interests, the disclosure of pecuniary interests, sensitive interests and other relevant interests. (Part 5 Member Code of Conduct Part 2)</p> <p>The Member Code of Conduct reflects the standards in public life and the expectations on members in relation to integrity, objectivity, openness and honesty. (Part 5 Member Code of Conduct Part 1)</p>	
14.	<p>Paras 30/31/32 Page 16</p>	<p>Selecting a Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile and ways of working. 	<p>Chairs of committee receive training relating to their roles and meet with the other overview and scrutiny chairs and vice chairs to share good practice.</p> <p>All DCC overview and scrutiny chair and vice chair positions are appointed at the annual</p>	<p>It is proposed the role descriptors for committee chairs be reviewed to reflect the requirements of the new guidance.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 50		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chair should possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members. - It is strongly recommended that the Chair does not preside over scrutiny of their relatives. - The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot. 	<p>meeting of the council in accordance with the requirements of the council’s constitution. (Council Procedure Rules 2 - 1.1(g)). This has been a longstanding arrangement of the authority and constituent authorities.</p> <p>The election of chairs in a meeting open to the press and public ensures that decision making in DCC is open, transparent and accountable to the public. The adoption of a secret ballot for the selection of committee chairs may be interpreted as a mechanism to avoid public scrutiny of the process and appears at odds with the principles which all council members follow and are enshrined in the member’s Code of Conduct. (Code of Conduct Part 1 para 4.2)</p> <p>The political groups pay due regard to the requirements for selecting committee members in the informal processes they currently utilise. Role descriptors are available to assist in selecting members. It would be appropriate to review these descriptors in view of the new guidance.</p> <p>The code of conduct for members forms part of the constitution which sets out the conduct all members are expected to follow. This includes the registration of interests, the disclosure of pecuniary interests, sensitive interests and other relevant interests. (Code of Conduct Part 2)</p>	<p>It is proposed that, subject to the above, no changes to the current arrangements to the selection of committee chairs are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
			<p>The new Code of Conduct requires members to declare private interests and to take steps to resolve conflicts of interests to protect public interest.</p>	
15.	<p>Paras 33 – 36 Page 16/17</p>	<p>Training for committee members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. - Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions. <p>Co-option and technical advice The provision of outside expertise can be invaluable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees. 	<p>Training and development for overview and scrutiny has been identified as an essential element of the council’s Member Development programme.</p> <p>Training for overview and scrutiny members planned for 2019/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and social media training (July 2019) – delivered by the Comms team • Questioning skills (Autumn 2019) – delivered by the LGA • Finance Training (Autumn 2019) – delivered by Paul Darby <p>Following a successful recruitment process for new co-optees in early 2018, DCC has continued to bring external voices into scrutiny to enhance our work and offer different perspectives and challenge. The co-opted members ensure a strong external representation, bring their own expertise and help scrutiny to engage with the public.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required in view of the training opportunities for members that are in place.</p> <p>It is proposed no changes are made to the current established arrangements for co-option and technical advice.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 52		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence. 	<p>The council's overview and scrutiny committees have engaged local academics and expertise as part of their review activity e.g. the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has worked with Professor Jon Gluyas, Dean of Knowledge Exchange, and Dong/Ikon Chair of Geoenergy Carbon Capture and Storage, Department of Earth Sciences, Durham University.</p>	
		Power to Access Information		
16.	Paras 37 – 44 Pages 18/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively. - Members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information - regulations give enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or confidential information - Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. 	<p>Members have access to enhanced access to information if it relates to an individual scrutiny review the member is involved in.</p> <p>Members have access to reports from a wide range of officers both within the council and external partners at Chief Executive, Director, Head of Service and manager level.</p> <p>Scrutiny sessions have been held to consider confidential/exempt information e.g. the procurement implications of the renegotiation of the Durham Park and Ride Service and the procurement of the new Drug and Alcohol service.</p> <p>Each scrutiny committee receives quarterly reports on performance management. The Audit Committee receives reports on risk.</p>	<p>It is proposed, as effective arrangements are in place and the relevant regulations are applied, that no further action is required on access to information.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members. - Before an authority takes a decision not to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session. 	<p>Members have previously expressed some concerns at the timeliness of information and reports being brought to scrutiny in respect of the scrutiny of the MTFP. This has been addressed by the earlier provision of details of savings made to scrutiny for the past two years.</p>	
17.	<p>Paras 45 and 46 Pages 19/20</p>	<p>Seeking information from external organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources, and should note in particular their statutory powers to access information from certain external organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny o The benefits of an informal approach 	<p>The overview and scrutiny team are experienced in successfully engaging with many external partners and organisations.</p> <p>Scrutiny committees have engaged with several providers of commissioned services e.g. commissioned services such as drug and alcohol treatment services, health visitors and school nursing services.</p> <p>The scrutiny committees have engaged local academics and expertise as part of their review activity.</p> <p>Three overview and scrutiny committees have statutory responsibilities for scrutinising matters which fall within their remit and have a good track</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes take place to seeking information from external organisations as current arrangements are working well.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 54		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to encourage compliance with an approach ○ Who to approach 	<p>record of exercising these responsibilities effectively.</p> <p>The Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a statutory role under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 as amended, to scrutinise local health services. For example, following scrutiny of planned changes to Ward 6 at Bishop Auckland Hospital the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee requesting that proposed consultation and engagement on the changes be paused. The Foundation Trust and CCGs agreed to undertake further staff and patient stakeholder engagement activity which would shape future models of care for the ward. The key impact was that Ward 6 remained open, continued to accept patients and be well utilised. It continues to do so until options for future services are developed and subject to formal consultation.</p> <p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has statutory responsibility under the Localism Act 2011 as amended, to scrutinise flooding and coastal risk management functions of the council and external bodies. It meets annually with the Flood Risk Management Authorities for County Durham to determine that they are working in partnership and receive detail of current and future investments.</p>	

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
			<p>The Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has powers under the Police and Justice Act 2006 as amended to scrutinise work being undertaken by the statutory crime and disorder reduction partnership; the Safe Durham Partnership.</p> <p>The Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has worked with Professor Alistair Irons, Academic Dean for Faculty of Computer Science, Sunderland University.</p> <p>Following Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee review activity, specific evaluations have been undertaken on 20mph limits by Durham University and Safe and Wellbeing visits by Teesside University.</p>	
18.	Para 46d Page 20	Following ‘the Council Pound’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in ‘following the council pound’, i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services. - Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this and consider the need to provide assistance to 	Existing service contracts already provide information for contract monitoring and it is considered that this is adequate to service the purposes of scrutiny oversight.	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 56		<p>scrutiny members and support staff to obtain information from organisations the council has contracted to deliver services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a <i>requirement</i> for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees. 		
		Planning Work		
19.	<p>Paras 48 and 52</p> <p>Page 21</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees with a separate work programme for each committee - consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total scrutiny resources available - When thinking about scrutiny's focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role 	<p>Overview and scrutiny committee work programmes are determined by overview and scrutiny members annually based upon a variety of factors including the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, the Sustainable Community Strategy and associated actions, government legislation, outcomes from quarterly performance reports and other plans and strategies including those of key partners.</p> <p>The current annual process of developing work programmes works well. Draft programmes are taken to each thematic overview and scrutiny committee during March. The work programmes are shared with chairs, vice chairs, executive members, senior officers and key stakeholders</p>	<p>Consideration could be given to reporting all the thematic overview and scrutiny work programmes to COSMB to provide oversight and co-ordination of scrutiny work.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
			<p>prior to being submitted to the first meeting of the municipal year for agreement.</p> <p>The work programme process recognises capacity of officers and members whilst maintaining flexibility to accommodate matters which may arise in year.</p> <p>Overview and scrutiny committees plan joint meetings on occasions to enable joint working across subject areas and avoid duplication of effort by individual committees.</p>	
20.	Para 53 Page 21	<p>Who to speak to - the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas. 	<p>Amplifying the voice of the public is one of the four principles of good scrutiny practice and it is championed by the Chair of COSMB.</p> <p>Current arrangements to ensure all scrutiny work is evidence-based work well in DCC.</p> <p>Many topics considered by scrutiny have generated a good deal of public interest and engagement e.g. the position of Ward 6 Bishop Auckland Hospital, Climate Change and the Durham Light Infantry Museum.</p> <p>There are statutory processes in place for members of the public who may wish to seek redress e.g. for health issues there are NHS complaints procedures, Healthwatch etc</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 58			The thematic overview and scrutiny agendas include a standing item of ‘any items from co-opted members or interested parties’ to enable matters to be discussed.	
21.	Para 53 Page 22	Who to speak to - the authority’s partners - relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items	DCC maintains comprehensive links with a wide range of partners e.g. police, fire and rescue service, local health service providers, clinical commissioning groups, registered social landlords, probation services, Northumbrian Water Ltd., Environment Agency, schools. The work programme is informed by plans and strategies of our key partners in addition to the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council Plan and other relevant documents.	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.
22.	Para 53 Page 22	Who to speak to - the executive - a principal partner in discussions on the work programme.	As part of the work programme development process the relevant Cabinet portfolio member is consulted. The councils Notice of Key decisions also informs the process.	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.
23.	Para 54/55 Page 22	Information sources Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function	The councils’ performance management information is reported regularly to the relevant scrutiny committee whilst COSMB receives the complete performance report to enable it to take an overview of the council’s performance.	It is proposed that the information highlighted in para 54 of the guidance regarding information sources routinely provided

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<p>scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance information from across the authority and its partners. - Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners. - Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries. - Business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre-decision scrutiny - Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman <p>Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review.</p>	<p>Finance reports are reported regularly to the relevant scrutiny committees. This complements the finance reporting mechanism to Cabinet and the Audit Committee. Detailed risk reporting is to Cabinet and the Audit Committee. High-level risks under each of the council's strategic aims are reported quarterly to scrutiny as part of the performance management reporting process.</p> <p>Corporate complaints information is reported to COSMB.</p> <p>There are no formal arrangements for reporting information from member surgeries.</p> <p>The reporting of business cases/options appraisals is considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place for the reporting of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman reports to COSMB.</p>	<p>to scrutiny committees be reviewed periodically.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
24.	Para 55 Page 23	<p>Shortlisting Topics</p> <p>Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. and require the development of bespoke, local solutions. The kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue? - How could we best carry out work on this subject? - What would be the best outcome of this work? - How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners? <p>Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. Others take a looser approach.</p> <p>A committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.</p>	<p>DCC overview and scrutiny committees shortlist topics for inclusion on the work programme on an informed basis as outlined above.</p> <p>As the processes are working well there is no need to change. In addition, conversations take place at executive and non-executive meetings around the work programme which help inform decisions.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
25.	Para 58 Page 23/24	<p>Carrying out work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a single item on a committee agenda - At a single meeting - At a task and finish review of two or three meetings - Via a longer-term task and finish review - By establishing a ‘standing panel’ 	<p>DCC currently use all of these methods for carrying out scrutiny work apart from the use of a standing panel. There are no proposals to change as these methods work well for DCC.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>
		Evidence sessions		
26.	Para 59 /60 Page 25	<p>Evidence sessions are a key way in which scrutiny committees inform their work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day. 	<p>The council's overview and scrutiny function continues to receive acknowledgement as a model of best practice with Durham receiving the Municipal Journal's Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny award in 2016 for its approach to scrutiny, community engagement and consultation and governance arrangements.</p> <p>Pre-meetings and development of questioning plans may be necessary if meetings are held in public and the topic is one which may provoke complex or sensitive questioning.</p>	<p>It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.</p>

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
Page 62		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans - Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session 		
27.	Para 66 Page 26	Developing recommendations Are normally three stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of a ‘heads of report’ – setting out general findings - the development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made - the drafting of the full report. Recommendations should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evidence-based and SMART - consider sharing them in draft. 	Processes and procedures in place at DCC generally reflect the guidance. DCC received an Excellence in Governance and Scrutiny award in 2016 which acknowledged our overview and scrutiny function as a model of best practice. We continue to ensure that our community engagement, consultation and governance arrangements are strong and thorough.	It is proposed that no changes to the current arrangements are required.

Item No.	Ref	Guidance – summary/extract	DCC position	Recommendation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response. - Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. 		

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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities



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Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

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Ministerial Foreword

The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and service failure.

It is vital that councils and combined authorities know the purpose of scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it and the benefits it can bring. This guidance aims to increase understanding in all four areas.

In writing this guidance, my department has taken close note of the House of Commons Select Committee report of December 2017, as well as the written and oral evidence supplied to that Committee. We have also consulted individuals and organisations with practical involvement in conducting, researching and supporting scrutiny.

It is clear from speaking to these practitioners that local and combined authorities with effective overview and scrutiny arrangements in place share certain key traits, the most important being a strong organisational culture. Authorities who welcome challenge and recognise the value scrutiny can bring reap the benefits. But this depends on strong commitment from the top - from senior members as well as senior officials.

Crucially, this guidance recognises that authorities have democratic mandates and are ultimately accountable to their electorates, and that authorities themselves are best-placed to know which scrutiny arrangements are most appropriate for their own individual circumstances.

I would, however, strongly urge all councils to cast a critical eye over their existing arrangements and, above all, ensure they embed a culture that allows overview and scrutiny to flourish.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rishi Sunak'.

Rishi Sunak MP
Minister for Local Government

About this Guidance

Who the guidance is for

This document is aimed at local authorities and combined authorities in England to help them carry out their overview and scrutiny functions effectively. In particular, it provides advice for senior leaders, members of overview and scrutiny committees, and support officers.

Aim of the guidance

This guidance seeks to ensure local authorities and combined authorities are aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it effectively and the benefits it can bring.

As such, it includes a number of policies and practices authorities should adopt or should consider adopting when deciding how to carry out their overview and scrutiny functions.

The guidance recognises that authorities approach scrutiny in different ways and have different processes and procedures in place, and that what might work well for one authority might not work well in another.

The hypothetical scenarios contained in the annexes to this guidance have been included for illustrative purposes, and are intended to provoke thought and discussion rather than serve as a 'best' way to approach the relevant issues.

While the guidance sets out some of the key legal requirements, it does not seek to replicate legislation.

Status of the guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Local authorities and combined authorities must have regard to it when exercising their functions. The phrase 'must have regard', when used in this context, does not mean that the sections of statutory guidance have to be followed in every detail, but that they should be followed unless there is a good reason not to in a particular case.

Not every authority is required to appoint a scrutiny committee. This guidance applies to those authorities who have such a committee in place, whether they are required to or not.

This guidance has been issued under section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 and under paragraph 2(9) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, which requires authorities to have regard to this guidance. In addition, authorities may have regard to other material they might choose to consider, including that issued by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, when exercising their overview and scrutiny functions.

Terminology

Unless 'overview' is specifically mentioned, the term 'scrutiny' refers to both overview and scrutiny.¹

Where the term 'authority' is used, it refers to both local authorities and combined authorities.

Where the term 'scrutiny committee' is used, it refers to an overview and scrutiny committee and any of its sub-committees. As the legislation refers throughout to powers conferred on scrutiny committees, that is the wording used in this guidance. However, the guidance should be seen as applying equally to work undertaken in informal task and finish groups, commissioned by formal committees.

Where the term 'executive' is used, it refers to executive members.

For combined authorities, references to the 'executive' or 'cabinet' should be interpreted as relating to the mayor (where applicable) and all the authority members.

For authorities operating committee rather than executive arrangements, references to the executive or Cabinet should be interpreted as relating to councillors in leadership positions.

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

¹ A distinction is often drawn between 'overview' which focuses on the development of policy, and 'scrutiny' which looks at decisions that have been made or are about to be made to ensure they are fit for purpose.

1. Introduction and Context

1. Overview and scrutiny committees were introduced in 2000 as part of new executive governance arrangements to ensure that members of an authority who were not part of the executive could hold the executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities.
2. Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers² to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy.

Effective overview and scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
- Drive improvement in public services.

3. The requirement for local authorities in England to establish overview and scrutiny committees is set out in sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
4. The Localism Act 2011 amended the Local Government Act 2000 to allow councils to revert to a non-executive form of governance - the 'committee system'. Councils who adopt the committee system are not required to have overview and scrutiny but may do so if they wish. The legislation has been strengthened and updated since 2000, most recently to reflect new governance arrangements with combined authorities. Requirements for combined authorities are set out in Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
5. Current overview and scrutiny legislation recognises that authorities are democratically-elected bodies who are best-placed to determine which overview and scrutiny arrangements best suit their own individual needs, and so gives them a great degree of flexibility to decide which arrangements to adopt.
6. In producing this guidance, the Government fully recognises both authorities' democratic mandate and that the nature of local government has changed in recent years, with, for example, the creation of combined authorities, and councils increasingly delivering key services in partnership with other organisations or outsourcing them entirely.

² Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 1 of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

2. Culture

7. The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails.
8. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.
9. Creating a strong organisational culture supports scrutiny work that can add real value by, for example, improving policy-making and the efficient delivery of public services. In contrast, low levels of support for and engagement with the scrutiny function often lead to poor quality and ill-focused work that serves to reinforce the perception that it is of little worth or relevance.
10. Members and senior officers should note that the performance of the scrutiny function is not just of interest to the authority itself. Its effectiveness, or lack thereof, is often considered by external bodies such as regulators and inspectors, and highlighted in public reports, including best value inspection reports. Failures in scrutiny can therefore help to create a negative public image of the work of an authority as a whole.

How to establish a strong organisational culture

11. Authorities can establish a strong organisational culture by:

- a) **Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy** – all members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.

Councillors have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value.

- b) **Identifying a clear role and focus** – authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority (see chapter 6).

Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. While it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority's financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role. The authority's section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic.

While scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority's whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications. Members should always follow the authority's constitution and associated Monitoring Officer directions on the matter. Further guidance on whistleblowing can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415175/bis-15-200-whistleblowing-guidance-for-employers-and-code-of-practice.pdf.

- c) **Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny** – authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter's future work programme. Authorities should, though, be mindful of their distinct roles:

In particular:

- The executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. This could be direct, e.g. by purporting to 'order' scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, e.g. through the use of the whip or as a tool of political patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work. All members and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a 'critical friend' not a de facto 'opposition'. Scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee (see chapter 4); and
- The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member's participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting.

- d) **Managing disagreement** – effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious. It is therefore inevitable that, at times, an executive will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee.

It is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement.

One way in which this can be done is via an 'executive-scrutiny protocol' (see annex 1) which can help define the relationship between the two and mitigate any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens. Often,

the value of such a protocol lies in the dialogue that underpins its preparation. It is important that these protocols are reviewed on a regular basis.

Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool.

- e) **Providing the necessary support** – while the level of resource allocated to scrutiny is for each authority to decide for itself, when determining resources an authority should consider the purpose of scrutiny as set out in legislation and the specific role and remit of the authority's own scrutiny committee(s), and the scrutiny function as a whole.

Support should also be given by members and senior officers to scrutiny committees and their support staff to access information held by the authority and facilitate discussions with representatives of external bodies (see chapter 5).

- f) **Ensuring impartial advice from officers** – authorities, particularly senior officers, should ensure all officers are free to provide impartial advice to scrutiny committees. This is fundamental to effective scrutiny. Of particular importance is the role played by 'statutory officers' – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid service, and where relevant the statutory scrutiny officer. These individuals have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.
- g) **Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority** – the scrutiny function can often lack support and recognition within an authority because there is a lack of awareness among both members and officers about the specific role it plays, which individuals are involved and its relevance to the authority's wider work. Authorities should, therefore, take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support.
- h) **Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee** – part of communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority should happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council's work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.

One way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council's capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner. Such

reports would supplement the annual report to full Council on scrutiny's activities and raise awareness of ongoing work.

In order to maintain awareness of scrutiny at the Combined Authority and provoke dialogue and discussion of its impact, the business of scrutiny should be reported to the Combined Authority board or to the chairs of the relevant scrutiny committees of constituent and non-constituent authorities, or both. At those chairs' discretion, particular Combined Authority scrutiny outcomes, and what they might mean for each individual area, could be either discussed by scrutiny in committee or referred to full Council of the constituent authorities.

- i) **Communicating scrutiny's role to the public** – authorities should ensure scrutiny has a profile in the wider community. Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, and any other relevant channels, to understand how to get that message across. This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process (see chapter 6).
- j) **Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset** – formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers.

Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them (see paragraph 25).

Scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively. In practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.

Directly-elected mayoral systems

12. A strong organisational culture that supports scrutiny work is particularly important in authorities with a directly-elected mayor to ensure there are the checks and balances to maintain a robust democratic system. Mayoral systems offer the opportunity for greater public accountability and stronger governance, but there have also been incidents that highlight the importance of creating and maintaining a culture that puts scrutiny at the heart of its operations.
13. Authorities with a directly-elected mayor should ensure that scrutiny committees are well-resourced, are able to recruit high-calibre members and that their scrutiny functions pay particular attention to issues surrounding:
 - rights of access to documents by the press, public and councillors;
 - transparent and fully recorded decision-making processes, especially avoiding decisions by 'unofficial' committees or working groups;
 - delegated decisions by the Mayor;
 - whistleblowing protections for both staff and councillors; and
 - powers of Full Council, where applicable, to question and review.

14. Authorities with a directly-elected mayor should note that mayors are required by law to attend overview and scrutiny committee sessions when asked to do so (see paragraph 44).

3. Resourcing

15. The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority.
16. Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it.
17. Authorities should also recognise that support for scrutiny committees, task groups and other activities is not solely about budgets and provision of officer time, although these are clearly extremely important elements. Effective support is also about the ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).

When deciding on the level of resource to allocate to the scrutiny function, the factors an authority should consider include:

- Scrutiny's legal powers and responsibilities;
- The particular role and remit scrutiny will play in the authority;
- The training requirements of scrutiny members and support officers, particularly the support needed to ask effective questions of the executive and other key partners, and make effective recommendations;
- The need for ad hoc external support where expertise does not exist in the council;
- Effectively-resourced scrutiny has been shown to add value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people; and
- Effectively-resourced scrutiny can help policy formulation and so minimise the need for call-in of executive decisions.

Statutory scrutiny officers

18. Combined authorities, upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer,³ someone whose role is to:
 - promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee;
 - provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members; and
 - provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.

³ Section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000; article 9 of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017

19. Authorities not required by law to appoint such an officer should consider whether doing so would be appropriate for their specific local needs.

Officer resource models

20. Authorities are free to decide for themselves which wider officer support model best suits their individual circumstances, though generally they adopt one or a mix of the following:

- Committee – officers are drawn from specific policy or service areas;
- Integrated – officers are drawn from the corporate centre and also service the executive; and
- Specialist – officers are dedicated to scrutiny.

21. Each model has its merits – the committee model provides service-specific expertise; the integrated model facilitates closer and earlier scrutiny involvement in policy formation and alignment of corporate work programmes; and the specialist model is structurally independent from those areas it scrutinises.

22. Authorities should ensure that, whatever model they employ, officers tasked with providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. The nature of these safeguards will differ according to the specific role scrutiny plays in the organisation.

4. Selecting Committee Members

23. Selecting the right members to serve on scrutiny committees is essential if those committees are to function effectively. Where a committee is made up of members who have the necessary skills and commitment, it is far more likely to be taken seriously by the wider authority.
24. While there are proportionality requirements that must be met,⁴ the selection of the chair and other committee members is for each authority to decide for itself. Guidance for combined authorities on this issue has been produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny⁵.

Members invariably have different skill-sets. What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions.

25. Authorities are reminded that members of the executive cannot be members of a scrutiny committee.⁶ Authorities should take care to ensure that, as a minimum, members holding less formal executive positions, e.g. as Cabinet assistants, do not sit on scrutinising committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate. Authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links (see also paragraph 31), between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa.
26. Members or substitute members of a combined authority must not be members of its overview and scrutiny committee.⁷ This includes the Mayor in Mayoral Combined Authorities. It is advised that Deputy Mayors for Policing and Crime are also not members of the combined authority's overview and scrutiny committee.

Selecting individual committee members

27. When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve.

⁴ See, for example, regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1020) and article 4 of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/68).

⁵ See pages 15-18 of 'Overview and scrutiny in combined authorities: a plain English guide': <https://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Overview-and-scrutiny-in-combined-authorities-a-plain-english-guide.pdf>

⁶ Section 9FA(3) of the Local Government Act 2000.

⁷ 2(3) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

28. Authorities should not take into account a member's perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party (notwithstanding the wider legal requirement for proportionality referred to in paragraph 24).

Selecting a chair

29. The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working.

30. The attributes authorities should and should not take into account when selecting individual committee members (see paragraphs 27 and 28) also apply to the selection of the Chair, but the Chair should also possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.

Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.

31. Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of their relatives⁸. Combined authorities should note the legal requirements that apply to them where the Chair is an independent person⁹.

32. The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot. Combined Authorities should be aware of the legal requirements regarding the party affiliation of their scrutiny committee Chair¹⁰.

Training for committee members

33. Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.

34. When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider taking advantage of opportunities offered by external providers in the sector.

Co-option and technical advice

35. While members and their support officers will often have significant local insight and an understanding of local people and their needs, the provision of outside expertise can be invaluable.

⁸ A definition of 'relative' can be found at section 28(10) of the Localism Act 2011.

⁹ See article 5(2) of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/68).

¹⁰ Article 5(6) of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

36. There are two principal ways to procure this:

- Co-option – formal co-option is provided for in legislation¹¹. Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees; and
- Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence (see annex 2).

¹¹ Section 9FA(4) Local Government Act 2000

5. Power to Access Information

37. A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively.
38. This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information¹². In particular, regulations give enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or confidential information. This is in addition to existing rights for councillors to have access to information to perform their duties, including common law rights to request information and rights to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
39. When considering what information scrutiny needs in order to carry out its work, scrutiny members and the executive should consider scrutiny's role and the legal rights that committees and their individual members have, as well as their need to receive timely and accurate information to carry out their duties effectively.
40. Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. Where this information exists, and scrutiny members are given support to understand it, the potential for what officers might consider unfocused and unproductive requests is reduced as members will be able to frame their requests from a more informed position.
41. Officers should speak to scrutiny members to ensure they understand the reasons why information is needed, thereby making the authority better able to provide information that is relevant and timely, as well as ensuring that the authority complies with legal requirements.

While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members.

42. The law recognises that there might be instances where it is legitimate for an authority to withhold information and places a requirement on the executive to provide the scrutiny committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision¹³. However, members of the executive and senior officers should take particular care to avoid refusing requests, or limiting the information they provide, for reasons of party political or reputational expediency.

¹² Regulation 17 - Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10 Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

¹³ Regulation 17(4) – Local Government (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10(4) Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

Before an authority takes a decision not to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session.

43. Regulations already stipulate a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member¹⁴. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:

- consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request; and
- Ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs.

44. Committees should be aware of their legal power to require members of the executive and officers to attend before them to answer questions¹⁵. It is the duty of members and officers to comply with such requests.¹⁶

Seeking information from external organisations

45. Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources, and should note in particular their statutory powers to access information from certain external organisations.

46. When asking an external organisation to provide documentation or appear before it, and where that organisation is not legally obliged to do either (see annex 3), scrutiny committees should consider the following:

- a) **The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny** – the organisation being approached might have little or no awareness of the committee's work, or of an authority's scrutiny function more generally, and so might be reluctant to comply with any request;
- b) **The benefits of an informal approach** – individuals from external organisations can have fixed perceptions of what an evidence session entails and may be unwilling to subject themselves to detailed public scrutiny if they believe it could reflect badly on them or their employer. Making an informal approach can help reassure an organisation of the aims of the committee, the type of information being sought and the manner in which the evidence session would be conducted;

¹⁴ Regulation 17(2) – Local Government (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10(2) Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

¹⁵ Section 9FA(8) of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 2(6) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

¹⁶ Section 9FA(9) of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 2(7) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

- c) **How to encourage compliance with the request** – scrutiny committees will want to frame their approach on a case by case basis. For contentious issues, committees might want to emphasise the opportunity their request gives the organisation to ‘set the record straight’ in a public setting; and
- d) **Who to approach** – a committee might instinctively want to ask the Chief Executive or Managing Director of an organisation to appear at an evidence session, however it could be more beneficial to engage front-line staff when seeking operational-level detail rather than senior executives who might only be able to talk in more general terms. When making a request to a specific individual, the committee should consider the type of information it is seeking, the nature of the organisation in question and the authority’s pre-existing relationship with it.

Following ‘the Council Pound’

Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in ‘following the council pound’, i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services.

Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this interest and, where relevant, consider the need to provide assistance to scrutiny members and their support staff to obtain information from organisations the council has contracted to deliver services. In particular, when agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a *requirement* for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees.

6. Planning Work

47. Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.
48. Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees sometimes have a separate work programme for each committee. Where this happens, consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.

Being clear about scrutiny's role

49. Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants', authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that there might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.
50. Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority's finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.
51. Applying this focus does not mean that certain subjects are 'off limits'. It is more about looking at topics and deciding whether their relative importance justifies the positive impact scrutiny's further involvement could bring.
52. When thinking about scrutiny's focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer, if an authority has one, will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role once agreed.

Who to speak to

53. Evidence will need to be gathered to inform the work programming process. This will ensure that it looks at the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. Gathering evidence requires conversations with:
 - *The public* – it is likely that formal 'consultation' with the public on the scrutiny work programme will be ineffective. Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas can work better. Insights gained from the public through individual pieces of scrutiny work can be fed back into the work programming process. Listening to and participating in conversations in places where local people come together, including in online forums, can help authorities engage people on their own terms and yield more positive results.

Authorities should consider how their communications officers can help scrutiny engage with the public, and how wider internal expertise and local knowledge from both members and officers might make a contribution.

- *The authority's partners* – relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items. A range of partners are likely to have insights that will prove useful:
 - Public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers);
 - Voluntary sector partners;
 - Contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies);
 - In parished areas, town, community and parish councils;
 - Neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas);
 - Cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships¹⁷; and
 - Others with a stake and interest in the local area – large local employers, for example.

- *The executive* – a principal partner in discussions on the work programme should be the executive (and senior officers). The executive should not direct scrutiny's work (see chapter 2), but conversations will help scrutiny members better understand how their work can be designed to align with the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.

Information sources

54. Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include:

- Performance information from across the authority and its partners;
- Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners;
- Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries;
- Business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre-decision scrutiny; and
- Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

¹⁷ Authorities should ensure they have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the effective democratic scrutiny of Local Enterprise Partnerships' investment decisions.

As committees can meet in closed session, commercial confidentiality should not preclude the sharing of information. Authorities should note, however, that the default for meetings should be that they are held in public (see 2014 guidance on '*Open and accountable local government*':

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343182/140812_Openness_Guide.pdf).

55. Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review. It is likely to be easier to do this outside committee, rather than bringing such information to committee 'to note', or to provide an update, as a matter of course.

Shortlisting topics

Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?

56. Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. If these are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. Others take a looser approach. Whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.

57. Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that, if work programming is robust and effective, there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.

Carrying out work

58. Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including:

- a) **As a single item on a committee agenda** – this often presents a limited opportunity for effective scrutiny, but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue;
- b) **At a single meeting** – which could be a committee meeting or something less formal. This can provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a

given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of witnesses;

- c) **At a task and finish review of two or three meetings** – short, sharp scrutiny reviews are likely to be most effective even for complex topics. Properly focused, they ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less;
- d) **Via a longer-term task and finish review** – the ‘traditional’ task and finish model – with perhaps six or seven meetings spread over a number of months – is still appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. However, the resource implications of such work, and its length, can make it unattractive for all but the most complex matters; and
- e) **By establishing a ‘standing panel’** – this falls short of establishing a whole new committee but may reflect a necessity to keep a watching brief over a critical local issue, especially where members feel they need to convene regularly to carry out that oversight. Again, the resource implications of this approach means that it will be rarely used.

7. Evidence Sessions

59. Evidence sessions are a key way in which scrutiny committees inform their work. They might happen at formal committee, in less formal 'task and finish' groups or at standalone sessions.

Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day.

How to plan

60. Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans. It is more often about setting overall objectives and then considering what type of questions (and the way in which they are asked) can best elicit the information the committee is seeking. This applies as much to individual agenda items as it does for longer evidence sessions – there should always be consideration in advance of what scrutiny is trying to get out of a particular evidence session.

Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session.

61. As far as possible there should be consensus among scrutiny members about the objective of an evidence session before it starts. It is important to recognise that members have different perspectives on certain issues, and so might not share the objectives for a session that are ultimately adopted. Where this happens, the Chair will need to be aware of this divergence of views and bear it in mind when planning the evidence session.
62. Effective planning should mean that at the end of a session it is relatively straightforward for the chair to draw together themes and highlight the key findings. It is unlikely that the committee will be able to develop and agree recommendations immediately, but, unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.
63. After an evidence session, the committee might wish to hold a short 'wash-up' meeting to review whether their objectives were met and lessons could be learned for future sessions.

Developing recommendations

64. The development and agreement of recommendations is often an iterative process. It will usually be appropriate for this to be done only by members, assisted by co-optees where relevant. When deciding on recommendations, however, members should have due regard to advice received from officers, particularly the Monitoring Officer.

65. The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.

66. Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages:

- i. the development of a 'heads of report' – a document setting out general findings that members can then discuss as they consider the overall structure and focus of the report and its recommendations;
- ii. the development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and
- iii. the drafting of the full report.

67. Recommendations should be evidence-based and SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed. Where appropriate, committees may wish to consider sharing them in draft with interested parties.

68. Committees should bear in mind that often six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response, although there may be specific circumstances in which more might be appropriate.

Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. It should, however, provide an opportunity for errors to be identified and corrected, and for a more general sense-check.

Annex 1: Illustrative Scenario – Creating an Executive-Scrutiny Protocol

An executive-scrutiny protocol can deal with the practical expectations of scrutiny committee members and the executive, as well as the cultural dynamics.

Workshops with scrutiny members, senior officers and Cabinet can be helpful to inform the drafting of a protocol. An external facilitator can help bring an independent perspective.

Councils should consider how to adopt a protocol, e.g. formal agreement at scrutiny committee and Cabinet, then formal integration into the Council's constitution at the next Annual General Meeting.

The protocol, as agreed, may contain sections on:

- The way scrutiny will go about developing its work programme (including the ways in which senior officers and Cabinet members will be kept informed);
- The way in which senior officers and Cabinet will keep scrutiny informed of the outlines of major decisions as they are developed, to allow for discussion of scrutiny's potential involvement in policy development. This involves the building in of safeguards to mitigate risks around the sharing of sensitive information with scrutiny members;
- A strengthening and expansion of existing parts of the code of conduct that relate to behaviour in formal meetings, and in informal meetings;
- Specification of the nature and form of responses that scrutiny can expect when it makes recommendations to the executive, when it makes requests to the executive for information, and when it makes requests that Cabinet members or senior officers attend meetings; and
- Confirmation of the role of the statutory scrutiny officer, and Monitoring Officer, in overseeing compliance with the protocol, and ensuring that it is used to support the wider aim of supporting and promoting a culture of scrutiny, with matters relating to the protocol's success being reported to full Council through the scrutiny Annual Report.

Annex 2: Illustrative Scenario – Engaging Independent Technical Advisers

This example demonstrates how one Council's executive and scrutiny committee worked together to scope a role and then appoint an independent adviser on transforming social care commissioning. Their considerations and process may be helpful and applicable in other similar scenarios.

Major care contracts were coming to an end and the Council took the opportunity to review whether to continue with its existing strategic commissioning framework, or take a different approach – potentially insourcing certain elements.

The relevant Director was concerned about the Council's reliance on a very small number of large providers. The Director therefore approached the Scrutiny and Governance Manager to talk through the potential role scrutiny could play as the Council considered these changes.

The Scrutiny Chair wanted to look at this issue in some depth, but recognised its complexity could make it difficult for her committee to engage – she was concerned it would not be able to do the issue justice. The Director offered support from his own officer team, but the Chair considered this approach to be beset by risks around the independence of the process.

She talked to the Director about securing independent advice. He was worried that an independent adviser could come with preconceived ideas and would not understand the Council's context and objectives. The Scrutiny Chair was concerned that independent advice could end up leading to scrutiny members being passive, relying on an adviser to do their thinking for them. They agreed that some form of independent assistance would be valuable, but that how it was provided and managed should be carefully thought out.

With the assistance of the Governance and Scrutiny Manager, the Scrutiny Chair approached local universities and Further Education institutions to identify an appropriate individual. The approach was clear – it set out the precise role expected of the adviser, and explained the scrutiny process itself. Because members wanted to focus on the risks of market failure, and felt more confident on substantive social care matters, the approach was directed at those with a specialism in economics and business administration. The Council's search was proactive – the assistance of the service department was drawn on to make direct approaches to particular individuals who could carry out this role.

It was agreed to make a small budget available to act as a 'per diem' to support an adviser; academics were approached in the first instance as the Council felt able to make a case that an educational institution would provide this support for free as part of its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility.

Three individuals were identified from the Council's proactive search. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee had an informal discussion with each – not so much to establish their skills and expertise (which had already been assessed) but to give a sense about

their 'fit' with scrutiny's objectives and their political nous in understanding the environment in which they would operate, and to satisfy themselves that they will apply themselves even-handedly to the task. The Director sat in on this process but played no part in who was ultimately selected.

The independent advice provided by the selected individual gave the Scrutiny Committee a more comprehensive understanding of the issue and meant it was able to offer informed advice on the merits of putting in place a new strategic commissioning framework.

Annex 3: Illustrative Scenario – Approaching an External Organisation to Appear before a Committee

This example shows how one council ensured a productive scrutiny meeting, involving a private company and the public. Lessons may be drawn and apply to other similar scenarios.

Concerns had been expressed by user groups, and the public at large, about the reliability of the local bus service. The Scrutiny Chair wanted to question the bus company in a public evidence session but knew that she had no power to compel it to attend. Previous attempts to engage it had been unsuccessful; the company was not hostile, but said it had its own ways of engaging the public.

The Monitoring Officer approached the company's regional PR manager, but he expressed concern that the session would end in a 'bunfight'. He also explained the company had put their improvement plan in the public domain, and felt a big council meeting would exacerbate tensions.

Other councillors had strong views about the company – one thought the committee should tell the company it would be empty-chaired if it refused to attend. The Scrutiny Chair was sympathetic to this, but thought such an approach would not lead to any improvements.

The Scrutiny Chair was keen to make progress, but it was difficult to find the right person to speak to at the company, so she asked council officers and local transport advocacy groups for advice. Speaking to those people also gave her a better sense of what scrutiny's role might be.

When she finally spoke to the company's network manager, she explained the situation and suggested they work together to consider how the meeting could be productive for the Council, the company and local people. In particular, this provided her with an opportunity to explain scrutiny and its role. The network manager remained sceptical but was reassured that they could work together to ensure that the meeting would not be an 'ambush'. He agreed in principle to attend and also provide information to support the Committee's work beforehand.

Discussions continued in the four weeks leading up to the Committee meeting. The Scrutiny Chair was conscious that while she had to work with the company to ensure that the meeting was constructive – and secure their attendance – it could not be a whitewash, and other members and the public would demand a hard edge to the discussions.

The scrutiny committee agreed that the meeting would provide a space for the company to provide context to the problems local people are experiencing, but that this would be preceded by a space on the agenda for the Chair, Vice-chair, and representatives from two local transport advocacy groups to set out their concerns. The company were sent in

advance a summary of the general areas on which members were likely to ask questions, to ensure that those questions could be addressed at the meeting.

Finally, provision was made for public questions and debate. Those attending the meeting were invited to discuss with each other the principal issues they wanted the meeting to cover. A short, facilitated discussion in the room led by the Chair highlighted the key issues, and the Chair then put those points to the company representatives.

At the end of the meeting, the public asked questions of the bus company representative in a 20-minute plenary item.

The meeting was fractious, but the planning carried out to prepare for this – by channelling issues through discussion and using the Chair to mediate the questioning – made things easier. Some attendees were initially frustrated by this structure, but the company representative was more open and less defensive than might otherwise have been the case.

The meeting also motivated the company to revise its communications plan to become more responsive to this kind of challenge, part of which involved a commitment to feed back to the scrutiny committee on the recommendations it made on the night.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

23 July 2019

County Durham Partnership Update

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of the Council

**Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) on issues being addressed by the County Durham Partnership. The report also includes updates on other key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

Executive summary

- 2 The County Durham Partnership (CDP) is leading the development of the County Durham Vision to ensure we fully reflect where we want to be in 2035. This will incorporate learning from the 'Wigan Deal' for potential opportunities for Durham and supports the new relationship with people, the VCS and local businesses.
- 3 The draft vision document will be subject to a third phase of consultation between 10th June and 30th July and will be going to AAPs and other forums. Final sign-off of the Durham Vision 2035 is by County Durham Partnership in September.
- 4 The Powered by People campaign supports inward investment, jobs and growth and uses one of the strengths of the county its people at the heart of the campaign. Our people are our strength, our inspiration and our advantage they are good for business.

- 5 On 1st April 2019, the 14 AAPs covering the whole of County Durham turned 10 years old. During this time, residents, partners, elected members and community representatives have worked together as part of the AAPs to develop and deliver a wide range of projects to benefit their local communities. The AAPs were commended in the MJ Achievement Awards for a decade of delivering better outcomes.
- 6 An AAP 10-year anniversary event, attended by over 300 people, took place on 24 April 2019 to recognise the outstanding work of public, partners and staff in making the 14 AAPs a great success over the last 10 years. The event also recognised the 14 projects that have been chosen by each Area Action Partnership as their 'project without equal' from the past 10 years.
- 7 The AAP priority survey sought the views of all residents (including children and young people) within County Durham on what priority themes and issues they consider the AAPs and their partners should be tackling in 2019/20 and 2020/21. In addition, over 1,000 survey participants asked to join their respective AAP forums.
- 8 8,585 residents from across County Durham completed the survey:
 - (a) 3,303 pupils from across 17 secondary schools;
 - (b) 5,282 residents who took part in the general SurveyMonkey survey or residents who took part through community or participatory budgeting events.
- 9 Participants were asked to select their top priority themes from a list of ten. Across the county:
 - (a) Children, Young People and Families theme was ranked number one across all voting methods
 - (b) Older People theme was ranked in the top three for all voting methods
 - (c) Health and Wellbeing theme was ranked in the top four for all voting methods
- 10 New safeguarding arrangements were passed into law through the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The new arrangements created the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) which has transitioned from the Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board which took effect from April 2019. The DSCP is led by an Executive with input from relevant agencies.

- 11 A Year of Culture is taking place in County Durham in 2019. There has been continual investment in the County and the opportunity to celebrate 2019 emerged with the range of events and anniversaries taking place. This includes being a host county for the Cricket World Cup, with three games taking place at the Riverside, Bishop Auckland and Seaham food festivals and the 10th anniversary of Lumiere.
- 12 The 2019 Year of Culture aims to extend stays and generate economic benefits for the local economy. The range of cultural events also aims to extend the season. Indirect benefits include improved health with a range of sporting events and involving communities to help cohesion.
- 13 County Durham has been selected as one of eight new national hubs to receive funding to tackle mental health stigma. The county will become a 2019 Time to Change funded Hub with the aim of helping change the way people think and act about mental health problems.

Recommendation

- 14 COSMB is recommended to note the contents of this update.

Background

- 15 The County Durham Partnership including the board, five thematic partnerships, safeguarding boards and all Area Action Partnerships lead on key initiatives being carried out in partnership across the county.

County Durham Partnership Board and Forum

- 16 The County Durham Partnership Board has met four times since the last update report.
- 17 November's meeting focused on the key messages from the **Voluntary and Community Sector** including opportunities for further partnership working, the impact on front line services, joint commissioning and investment opportunities and how it was important to work towards a clear pathway to volunteering and a joined up approach. The Board approved the emerging findings of the County Durham Vision 2035 for the next stage of consultation.
- 18 The December Board focussed on single use plastics and has signed a pledge to phase out the use of unnecessary and avoidable single use plastic. Progress on the area of prevention was also considered including:
- (a) the scaling up of a number of Area Action Partnership projects across the County, including wheels to work and dementia projects
 - (b) the use of two funding tools - GrantFinder and Open4Community by partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector.
 - (c) the roll out of making every contact count which will strengthen the link between the community and peer mentors
 - (d) workforce development to equip managers and staff to support people with mental health needs in the workplace across County Durham
- 19 The March board discussed the 2019 Year of Culture and Selective Licensing. Selective Licensing was introduced under part 3 of the Housing Act 2004 and gave councils the power to designate an area for selective licensing, providing certain criteria are met. Landlords operating in a selective licensing area would need to apply to the council for a licence and prove they are a 'fit and proper person'. A business case is currently being drafted for Durham to have 100% coverage based on middle super output areas and six designations are available, including if an area is suffering from poor property conditions, high levels of deprivation and high levels of crime.

- 20 The May board focused on several children and young people items including the new Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, strategic improvements in Children's Services and the VCS Alliance.
- 21 Strategic improvements included: Liquid Logic which is a new recording / IT system for children's services which is now in place to help facilitate a more responsive system for performance management and oversight, Signs of Safety and investment in social work staff. The VCS Alliance makes links with local VCS organisations which allows families to participate in activities and access support services within their own area to support improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 22 The CDP Forum in February focused on the proposal to mark 10 years of the AAPs, the County Durham vision and the consultation on the Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy was well received as a good opportunity to consider housing issues across the County, including further partnership working and raising the standards of private rented homes.

Area Action Partnership 10-year anniversary event

- 23 On 1st April 2019, the 14 AAPs covering the whole of County Durham turned 10 years old.
- 24 An AAP 10-year anniversary event, which was sponsored by local businesses, took place on 24 April 2019 to recognise the outstanding work of public, partners and staff in making the 14 AAPs a great success over the last 10 years.
- 25 Without these dedicated individuals the partnerships would not have been able to deliver over 6,000 community projects.
- 26 The purpose of the evening was to thank people for their fantastic efforts and also to recognise the 14 projects that have been chosen by each Area Action Partnership as their 'project without equal' from the past 10 years. Over 6,000 community projects have been delivered across the county; securing millions of pounds of match funding to support the delivery of these initiatives and benefitting thousands of residents of all ages, the unemployed, local businesses and the more vulnerable residents within their communities. Projects which have initially started with AAP resources have gone on to grow and develop across the county.
- 27 The winners for each Area Action Partnership are of these are listed as follows with further information about each project available in Appendix 2:

- (a) Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership – Crisis Intervention
- (b) Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership - Employability Skills Fund
- (c) Chester le Street and District Area Action Partnership – Market Activity Week
- (d) 4 Together Partnership – Days of our Lives
- (e) Spennymoor Area Action Partnership – Sponsor A Grown Up
- (f) Teesdale Area Action Partnership – Intergen
- (g) Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership – Beat the Scammers
- (h) Durham Area Action Partnership – Cheesy Waffles Project
- (i) East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership – Plastic Fantastic
- (j) Stanley Area Action Partnership – Stanley Advice Centre
- (k) Weardale Area Action Partnership – Wheels to Meals Project
- (l) 3 Towns Partnership – The Victory Programme
- (m) Mid Durham Area Action Partnership – Intergenerational and Community Buildings Project
- (n) East Durham Area Action Partnership - Welfare Champions

Voluntary and Community Services

28 Partnership working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) continues to develop. The second Better Together VCS Policy Forum was held in February with a focus on Social Prescribing. The forum brought together representatives from key Voluntary Sector organisations, commissioners, and public sector leads to look at how models for social prescribing work and share knowledge and expertise about how a model may work for County Durham. The VCS are continuing to work collaboratively, together with colleagues in the Council and NHS, to develop a shared vision and will be carrying on discussion and debate via the partnership forums, including Advice in County Durham and the Better Together network. This is timely, as NHS England has said it plans to recruit 1,000 social prescribing link workers by April 2021.

Faith Communities

- 29 Valuing the contribution of Faith Communities continues to be recognised through partnership activities. Faith and Wellbeing events have been hosted by **Bishop Auckland and Shildon (BASH) and Stanley AAPs** exploring the contribution of churches and faith communities to the health and wellbeing of local communities. Two breakfast seminars bringing together elected members, officers, partners and faith communities have also taken place considering the developing Durham Vision and Humanising Housing, looking at the challenges around building communities and ensuring that they are developed, structured and designed to ensure human flourishing in all its manifestations.
- 30 Many people visit Durham because of its strong ecclesiastical connections. **Durham AAP** funding is helping 'Visit Durham' to produce a Churches Map of Durham. This will highlight the historical churches and church yards in the Durham city area on a handy map. It is hoped that the map will help people make the most of their visit to Durham and encourage them to stay in the city a bit longer.

Armed Forces

- 31 As part of our commitment to supporting the Armed Forces Community we maintain an outward facing Armed Forces Forum with representation from the council, public sector partners, the local military presence (Royal Navy, Army, RAF) and key military charities. The forum met in March and heard about innovative research by the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Family Research to map veterans' and their families' welfare needs across the whole of the UK. A 12-month pilot project with Durham Dales Easington and Sedgefield (DDES) CCG will utilise this research and test out a link to GP surgeries to enable them to refer veterans to appropriate support. The County Durham Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018/19 was received which highlighted the work of the Armed Forces Outreach Service and the honour of receiving the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.
- 32 As part of the Gold Award the council has developed a Cadet Force Adult Volunteer (CFAV) Policy where uniformed CFAV's will be entitled to up to 10 working days paid leave per rolling year (pro-rata for part-time employees) for attendance at their annual training camp and/or other relevant training.

Local Councils Working Group

- 33 The Local Councils Working Group agreed the revision of the Local Councils Charter. The revision to the Charter focusses on three key

elements of Communication, Co-operation and Consultation. These elements build on the partnership working already in place and address the changing landscape in which the public sector operates, including the significant reduction in public sector funding and resources. The Charter is a framework to support good relationships, develop joint working and shared resources.

Prevention

- 34 Work is being undertaken to examine significant best practice from across the country. A study visit to Wigan Council (Council of the Year 2019) took place in January 2019 to examine the 'Wigan Deal' which involves a set of principles aiming to improve the prevention agenda. These include:
- (a) A new relationship between public services and citizens, communities and businesses
 - (b) Building on the assets and strengths of individuals, families and communities
 - (c) Integrated place-based services delivered in partnership
 - (d) An engaged workforce with core behaviours
 - (e) Confident communities where everyone does their bit
 - (f) Freedom and permission to innovate
- 35 The 'Wigan Deal' includes a focus on adult social care and health providing a pioneering approach which is transforming this service in Wigan from one which focused on traditional health and social care services to one which builds independence and self-reliance. The Wigan Deal for Adult Social Care and Health strengthens communities by taking an innovative asset-based approach to service provision by placing customers at the heart.
- 36 Learning from these approaches is being considered to understand potential opportunities for Durham to feed into the County Durham vision and is wider than health and social care and fits into the new relationship with people, the VCS and local businesses.

Safeguarding

- 37 The new Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) has transitioned from the Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board. The DSCP is led by an Executive and includes the three statutory safeguarding partners of local authorities, Chief Officers of police and Clinical Commissioning Groups with input from relevant agencies.

- 38 The relevant agencies will be represented by four agency groups that will be expected to meet and provide assurance reports to the Executive Group on an annual basis. These agency groups will represent the Criminal Justice Service, Education Sector, Health Service and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- 39 The DSCP Independent Chair and the local authority Children and Young People's Service representative will engage with the Local Authority Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People every two months. The DSCP will use a values and performance framework developed during the transition to the new arrangements. This framework focuses on improving outcomes within the geographic boundaries of the partnership area.
- 40 The transition to the new arrangements was achieved three months ahead of the statutory deadline and was achieved through a six-month project which engaged partner organisations in addressing five separate workstreams.
- 41 The new partnership arrangements address the duty on new Child Death Review partners to review the deaths of children normally resident in the local area.
- 42 As reported previously, the Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) Business Unit has led on the development of a Modern Slavery Charter. The Charter focusses upon three key aims of prevention, protection and partnership working. Measuring and monitoring of a range of related activities against the Charter will inform upon its impact.
- 43 The LSAB annual event took place on 10 April 2019 which focused on self-neglect. It explored self-neglect in the broader context and to how a preventative approach might support this. Over 100 people attended the event with key speakers from Northumbria University, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), T-ASC (Training, Advice, Solutions and Consultancy) and Housing Solutions. Positive feedback was received, and delegates attended from over 25 agencies inclusive of the Care Quality Commission, service providers and the voluntary sector. Actions from the event will be taken forward by the LSAB.
- 44 The Safeguarding Boards held a joint Safeguarding Week in November 2018. The week focussed upon sharing key messages through social media, as well as a stallholder event. The week concluded with a range of briefing sessions covering topics such as Modern Slavery, Counter Terrorism and Prevent, and Carers Rights. Feedback for the briefings received showed 95 per cent of attendees felt they had received useful and relevant information.

Altogether Wealthier

- 45 The Powered by People campaign supports inward investment, jobs and growth and uses one of the strengths of the county its people at the heart of the campaign.
- 46 To develop the campaign, the Council engaged with a range of stakeholders across the Durham business community to define a proposition about business in Durham and, through a series of workshops identified that it is the people that makes Durham unique and that business in Durham is Powered by People.
- 47 Our research and development work gave a very strong message that our people make Durham different and very attractive to potential investors. Our people are our strength, our inspiration and our advantage, they are good for business.
- 48 The County Durham Economic Partnership has now been restructured with members identified with specific portfolios aligned to the national Industrial Strategy, this includes an Independent Chair and portfolio holders for Resources, Business Competiveness, Ideas and Innovation, Infrastructure, Inclusive Growth and People. Voices of the Public Sector, VCS and businesses are also represented.
- 49 A key objective of the Board is to develop and embed an economic and industrial strategy that is shared by all partners, enabling a coherent response to be given to opportunities as they arise. The work of the Economic Partnership continues to be led via the sub groups which are:
- (a) Business, Enterprise and Skills Working Group
 - (b) The Thriving Durham City Board
 - (c) Visit County Durham County Council
 - (d) Business Durham
 - (e) Housing Forum
 - (f) Cultural Partnership
 - (g) Rural Working Group
- 50 There has been continual investment in the County and the opportunity to celebrate 2019 emerged with the range of events and anniversaries taking place with the 2019 Year of Culture. A range of promotional activity is taking place, including an online presence with the launch of the website (thisisdurham.com/19), social media ([#durham19](https://twitter.com/durham19)),

Newcastle airport advertising and the launch of a toolkit as well as the with the potential to attract hundreds of first-time visitors to the county.

- 51 The global debut of Paula Radcliffe's Families on Track will mark the finale of the first Durham City Run Festival, a three-day event from 25-27 July, which will take over the centre of Durham and the Gala Theatre, featuring films, talks, book signings, a running expo, free running activities, a new mile challenge called 'Run Like a Legend', and the already popular Prince Bishops 5K and 10K runs.
- 52 **Chester-le-Street & District AAP** are working with the local business community and local partners to prepare for the Cricket World Cup that will take place as part of the 2019 Year of Culture in June / July. The AAP have contributed funding towards a community-based festival in partnership with the Durham County Cricket Club Foundation that will showcase what Chester-le-Street has to offer through engagement with both businesses and local voluntary groups. This will be held the week prior to the first match at Emirates Durham and will give the chance for the wider community to celebrate the town being on the world sporting stage. Other works are also planned to ensure a warm welcome for the thousands of visitors that will be coming to County Durham.
- 53 An award of £700k has been granted to target entrenched rough sleepers across the north east region, identify support needs and assisting into permanent tenancies. Durham County Council will lead the coordination of the regional project with the eleven north east local councils.
- 54 The rural landscape of **Weardale AAP** was once home to large quarrying activities and now has limited infrastructure to support employment. Working with the governors and head teacher of Wolsingham School "cadetships" have been developed to support recruitment into the uniformed services. Working with our Civil Contingencies Unit a scenario around flooding in Wolsingham was developed to show how the AAP could support the community to ensure the safety of individuals and property. The activities then advised the model of working that could be used as "best practice" both regionally and nationally. The scenario and exercise engaged the Environment Agency, Army, Fire and Police Cadets, the mini Police, parish council and parents.
- 55 In partnership with Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services (UTASS), **Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP)** has used Welfare Reform Funding to help create a rural advice hub for the Upper Dales. Funding will be specifically used to develop and deliver a range of 24 hours a day, seven days a week support and advice service for those with urgent needs. Support will be made available through general drop

in advice sessions and a 24-hour telephone advice line. The project will also work with a number of referral partners, for example, Citizens Advice Bureau, Rural Payments Agency and North East First Credit Union.

- 56 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** has worked with Durham Savers to encourage people to save on a regular basis and help them to budget to meet unexpected events, for example, a washing machine breakdown, or income reduction/redundancy. To support people not to use pay day loans, doorstep lenders and weekly payment stores funding has been used to support residents, young people and their families through the employment of a Project Officer to engage with local firms and schools to raise the financial awareness and capability of young people, by establishing a savings 'Bank' within school, and salary savings schemes with local firms. This is then used as a vehicle to engage parents, guardians and school staff in financial issues and education and discussions on the negative impact that poor financial management can have on their lives. To date there is a total of 288 adult accounts with savings of £67,884 and loans of £41,566. Young savers have savings of £12,552.

Altogether better for children and young people

- 57 As highlighted in the last report, the Children and Young People's Strategy has now been agreed after undergoing a comprehensive consultation and revision process with a wide range of stakeholders including Durham County Council services, partner organisations and children, young people and their families.
- 58 This strategy supports the aspirations of children and young people across the county, encouraging them to strive for greater things, providing them with educational, social and cultural experiences and instilling in them a belief that they can achieve.
- 59 The vision that every child can achieve their greatest potential is combined with the desire to foster in them a sense of pride about their home county. This creates advocates for the future who will help share the message that our county is a wonderful place to live and inspire them to stay in the county as they grow into adults, looking for careers and starting families of their own.
- 60 In **Great Aycliffe and Midridge Partnership GAMP AAP** "Us Girls" targeted girls aged 13+ into sport related activities. The programme was youth led in that the young people were consulted on what activities they would like to take part in, with the aim to provide new and exciting opportunities where possible. The programme aimed to target 'non sporty' girls, who traditionally would not access formal sporting activities. During the lifespan of the project around 50 girls have

participated in regular physical activity through the project. The project has made a huge difference to the girls that have engaged in both the afterschool and community clubs, for example; two of the participants have started PE Apprenticeships with Sedgefield School Sport Partnership.

- 61 A number of AAPs have been working with partners on the Kicks programme. Kicks is young people led, with a steering group in place to help drive the programme forward by choosing activities which will further empower young people to become engaged. Kicks appoints young leaders to represent the group and feed information to the Kicks group. Opportunities to become peer mentors and volunteers are offered to those interested as well as a possible pathway for both education and sport within the Foundation, as well as signposting young people to new opportunities by third parties.
- 62 The Kicks project provides sessions for those aged 13-19 in the **Spennymoor AAP** area enabling participants to take part in a multitude of physical activities with the potential progress into further education to prevent, for example, anti-social behaviour and young people becoming NEET (not in employment or education). In January-March 2019, targets have been surpassed with 36 young people now engaged in the youth provision. Workshops that have taken place and included discussions on the benefits of exercise, implications of a poor diet and the impacts of social media on mental health which were led by the young people.
- 63 **East Durham Rural Corridor AAP** led a Kicks session for those aged 8-19 in Trimdon Village and Kelloe to enable the young people to then progress into further education and try to prevent anti-social behaviour and young people becoming NEET. The performance indicator relating to the number of children and young people involved in schemes to help them make healthy choices has achieved more than double its target of 50.
- 64 In response to young people telling the AAP that they don't have enough opportunity for physical activity at school, Active 10, 20 and 30 campaigns have been launched in schools. This means schools have signed up to doing at least 10, 20 or 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day in school. Currently over 100 schools are engaged.
- 65 Working with Public Health and 0-19 school nursing service, **Weardale AAP** provided tooth brushes and toothpaste and encouraged children to brush their teeth in school to promote good dental hygiene and oral health to reduce tooth decay in later life.

- 66 Following the first Corporate Parenting Annual 2017-18 that young people from the County Durham Children in Care Council (CICC) have written, work is taking place with young people from the CICC to write the CPP annual report for 2018-19.
- 67 Looked After Children shared their concerns about the contact centres, which are used across the county for contact with parents, family members and foster carers as not being conducive to having a pleasant session. Members were approached, as corporate parents, and asked to donate monies from their neighbourhood budgets to make improvements to the settings. Work took place with groups of young people to identify what they would like to purchase to make it a nicer setting, for example, rugs, radios, art, games etc. The first contact centre has been refurbished, and work is currently underway with a further four.

Altogether healthier

- 68 County Durham has been selected as one of eight new national hubs to receive funding to tackle mental health stigma. The county will become a 2019 Time to Change funded Hub, coordinated by Investing in Children, with the aim of helping change the way people think and act about mental health problems.
- 69 Time to Change Durham will be provided with £15,000 start-up budget along with £10,000 for a Champions Fund. This allows local 'champions' to bid for funding to run stigma-busting events and activities within their area.
- 70 The Hub will combine the insights of the national Time to Change campaign with local knowledge. It will support communities, workplaces and schools to take action to end negative attitudes and behaviours towards people experiencing mental health problems in their communities.
- 71 Time to Talk day took place in February which encouraged people in the workplace to talk about mental health. This included our health advocates being active during Time to Talk day promoting Time to Change at as many of the council's sites as possible to encourage conversations about mental health and partner colleagues being encouraged to make mental health an agenda item at team meetings, encourage all managers to approach the subject and make staff aware that they can talk about their mental health.
- 72 **Derwent Valley AAP** has worked with a specialist in behavioural education Delta North to work with around 70 young people locally, each with needs that were not being met in mainstream school. As an

organisation they were keen to assist young people in the development of their mental health and offer tools to help them when they needed it. Under this project, they have devoted key areas of their building to be used for art based therapeutic means through digital art, drawing, doodling, crafts and mural painting. They have been supported by the **Derwent Valley AAP** to create a bank of creative artistic tools and resources which will be placed in these key areas and to train various staff on ways to incorporate art as a therapeutic tool with young people.

- 73 The Durham Health and Care System plan has been developed which outlines the key programmes of work to be undertaken over the next year including any engagement and consultation activities. A joint Health and Wellbeing Board and Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee session will take place in June 2019 to help shape the five-year system plan.
- 74 Following the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting in September 2018, it was agreed that there should be a combined 'Think Autism in County Durham' action plan and an overarching all-age strategy for 2018-20. The aim of this approach is to improve support for individuals during the transition from childhood through to adulthood. The strategy was launched as part of World Autism Awareness Week, which ran in the first week in April to raise awareness of the range of services and support available around the county.
- 75 The Children and Young people's Autism Post Formulation Offer is a 12-month pilot aiming to improve access to mainstream services through reasonable adjustments and prevention of exclusion from schools.
- 76 A number of AAPs have been working with partners on the issue of older people's social isolation to decide where to invest their Older People Social Isolation Funding (OPSIF) of £25,000.
- 77 **3 towns AAP** has created an e-network to inform providers of relevant training and funding opportunities, supported several organisations to successfully apply for external funding for:
- (a) current and new activity which includes funding for the running costs for a dementia café and for a social group with links to local GPs
 - (b) transport for a Willington luncheon club
 - (c) a new luncheon club in Crook ran by Churches together.
- 78 **TAP and BASH AAPs** are working with Supportive to deliver a volunteer driver scheme to reduce isolation amongst residents aged

50+. Supportive are a charity who support a home care and volunteer driving scheme across County Durham. The scheme will help residents attend Hospital visits and community events/facilities.

- 79 **BASH AAP** are working with Groundwork North East to deliver the Green Links programme. Green links is a client led programme of eco therapy which addresses social isolation and low activity of people with dementia and their carers. The scheme provides regular social activities with the use of the outdoors and develops practical skills along with walking and gardening.
- 80 **4 Together AAP** are working with the Cornforth Partnership as lead on their Healthy Communities Project. A wide range of programmes have taken place, aimed at tackling socially isolated older people across the 4 Together locality, including yoga, pilates, various days out and bulb planting. Cornforth Partnership are liaising with Durham Community Action to try and target new volunteers for the befriending element of the project. Numbers have increased from around 6 people a week to over 20 a week attending the lunch club and Supportive are providing transport for those who need it. A number of local groups have been involved in delivery, thus benefiting the local area. There have also been some good links established with local faith groups to link to their befriending/volunteer networks.
- 81 **Durham AAP** funded the 'Durham's Fybro Haven' a support group for people living with autoimmune conditions such as fibromyalgia to support the weekly sessions at Bearpark Community Centre. The users of the group all said how the group had made a big difference to their quality of life.
- 82 The roll out of Dementia friendly communities continues with **East Durham AAP** seeing both Seaham and Blackhall gaining the status of Dementia Friendly Communities. The launch events saw a wide range of partners and schools outlining what they had achieved to date and why they were involved.

Altogether safer

- 83 The Hate Hurts campaign has been launched to show that partners are united against Hate Crime in Durham and Darlington. The number of hate crimes which are reported to the Police has increased by about a quarter over the past four years. This rise also reflects that people are more prepared than they used to be to report hate crimes to the Police. The Joint Hate Crime Action group, a multi-agency group of colleagues in the public and community sectors, working with the Safe Durham Partnership, has overseen a number of projects to address hate crime and continues to do so.

- 84 **East Durham AAP** has worked with the Fire and Rescue Service to launch the Easington Safety Centre as a community hub for the locality to provide training and education for the community and safety issues.
- 85 Durham Police Officers, Fire Service Officers and Youth Workers were brought together by **Stanley AAP** to combat anti-social behaviour and secondary fires. The aim was to take an active role to support local young people to create videos with the two themes highlighted within the videos. These videos will focus on the consequences of taking part in such activity and the impact such actions have on the wider community.
- 86 **Stanley AAP** are focusing on online safety and looking at all issues that affect young people from cyber bullying to how to stay safe online, the project will work with young people to identify issues and how to deal with them effectively. This builds upon the work of the Safer Cyber group, a sub group of the Safe Durham Partnership, who are producing a short film to raise awareness of Cybercrime. Students from New College Durham are leading this work and a launch is being planned for June. The resource will be shared with partners and schools.
- 87 'Beat the Scammers' delivered by Age UK County Durham is being extended by **Mid Durham AAP** to ensure those older people in demand of the call blocker system and further support in relation to personal and home safety can be accommodated. The project is hoping to impact on a further 100 older people.
- 88 **3 Towns Partnership AAP** worked with Prison Me! No Way! who delivered a Crime & Safety Awareness Day at Parkside Academy to all year 8 pupils. They are also working on the bespoke delivery of Your Choice days which will be delivered in two primary schools as a pilot in the 3 Towns Area involving over 300 Children and Young People in programmes designed to help them make healthy choices.

Altogether greener

- 89 This year's Big Spring Clean commenced in February at the Locomotion Museum at Shildon and concluded on the 9 April 2019. The campaign saw 2,215 volunteers take part in 187 litter picks, collecting 3318 bags of rubbish across the county. This year's campaign collected 297 more bags of rubbish than last year with a total of 5202.5 volunteer hours accumulated.
- 90 The council and partners have signed a single use plastics pledge in a bid to eradicate single use plastics. Many partners have already reduced their single use plastic consumption such as eliminating the use of plastic straws and cutlery and reusing cups.

- 91 A group of children from all year groups at St Bede's school, have been helping it discard as much plastic use as possible. This includes steps such as introducing reusable water bottles and using tin foil instead of cling film to cover food during lunchtime. Having already been awarded Plastic Free School status by the Government last year the school was quick to sign up to the pledge. The children are much more aware of the environmental effect of plastic pollution now and it has made them a lot more thoughtful.
- 92 In addition, Northumbrian Water are promoting its Refill scheme to reduce reliance on single use plastic bottles by encouraging businesses to sign up to become Refill Stations. This allows people to fill up their bottles with tap water free of charge.
- 93 The Stainton Grove Household Waste Recycling Centre reopened in March 2019 after a £3m transformation by the Building and Facilities Maintenance Team. The site affords residents and businesses more opportunities to recycle more materials and now has a shop where used goods will be sold.
- 94 Ecology and Clean Green teams are working to deliver a countywide network of multi-functional green spaces that maximise the environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. This highly ambitious project seeks to redefine the management of our green spaces to deliver more wildlife, improved health and well-being and enriched recreational spaces in County Durham.
- 95 In Easington Colliery Local Nature Reserve, a 1.9km footpath is being created around the reserve to allow residents and visitors year-round access and help reduce the impacts of unmanaged access across the site and the neighbouring coastal Special Area of Conservation. Along with the path, entrances are being upgraded, designing out small scale fly-tipping hotspots.
- 96 The **Derwent Valley AAP** has worked in partnership with OASES to deliver a School Apple Project involving a range of schools and youth groups encouraging children to improve their local environment, learn new horticultural and cooking skills and gain an appreciation of where fruit comes from. The project has consisted of school assemblies raising awareness of how to reduce food waste, fruit education sessions, an 'apple swap', juicing workshops and cooking classes to create fruit kebabs, apple crumbles and flapjack. The project is culminating in collective orchard planting and community events at each participating school so schools can continue to grow their own fruit on school grounds. 791 children have so far participated in the project.

- 97 **Chester-le-Street & District AAP** has agreed an allocation of funding to improve the entrance into Chester-le-Street by working with the Clean and Green Team on the Park Road North roundabout which is the main route into Chester-le-Street from the A1. The scheme will see a more sustainable, lower maintenance planting scheme adopted for the roundabout improving the visual ascetic for visitors coming into the Town
- 98 Naturally Social is a mechanism to support older people to access a constructive, positive, healthy and sociable activity in the local area. Clients and existing volunteers meet regularly and do small scale tasks such as cutting back vegetation, clearing footpaths, keeping sites tidy, going for walks and spotting wildlife. **Stanley AAP** has supported the Naturally Social Officer to encourage existing volunteers to be the group's friendly face, welcoming new members to put people at their ease and becoming advocates for Naturally Social. Naturally Social's success will be assessed on how participants have felt, if they enjoyed it, feel fitter and more involved in their local area, and made new friends.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

Contact: Gordon Elliott

Tel: 03000 263605

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None

Finance

Area and neighbourhood budgets are utilised and delivered through the 14 AAPs and ensure the council (and AAPs) receive improved information on the outputs achieved through use of locality budgets.

Consultation

The County Durham Partnership framework is a key community engagement and consultation function of the Council and its partners. The recommendations in the report are based on extensive consultation with AAP partners.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The actions set out in this report aim to ensure equality and diversity issues are embedded within the thematic partnerships and the working practice of AAPs.

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

Altogether safer is the responsibility of the Safe Durham Partnership.

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Appendix 2: Area Action Partnership 10-year Anniversary Award Winners

1. Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership

Crisis Intervention - Delivered by Woodhouse Close Church Community Centre

This project has been supported since 2010 and funded with various budgets including Area Budget, Neighbourhood Budget and Welfare Reform.

Funding has been used to contribute to worker salaries, packs and provisions and running costs.

The project supports people in crisis. Support can be in the form of food, furniture, heating and utilities and advice and is based on what the client needs. The support is confidential, friendly, encouraging and supportive.

Although funded by AAP and others the project is successful because of the input and commitment of volunteers.

The project has supported thousands of people as support and advice has an impact on the wider family as well as the individual seeking support.

2. Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership AAP

Employability Skills Fund - Delivered by Bishop Auckland College

This project provides funds up to £1000 aimed at supporting unemployed clients aged 16 and over into employment and also supports upskilling clients on low wages or zero-hour contracts to reduce their dependency on benefits and enhance their job prospects. The discretionary element supports the removal of barriers to accessing training or employment, for example, transport, equipment, childcare. A robust application, evidence and approval process ensures that funds are aligned to labour market gaps where no other funding is available.

The AAP has supported the project via Area Budget, Neighbourhood Budget and Welfare Reform funding and has promoted the project through a plethora

of partners which has resulted in three further AAPs funding this project (BASH, Spennymoor and TAP).

3. Chester le Street AAP

Market Activity Week – Delivered by Durham Constabulary, Chester-le-Street Neighbourhood Police Team

This project provides a summer event of free family focused activities in the town centre market place to engage families, deliver community safety messages and forge better relationships between uniformed services and the young people. It dispels the myth of parents 'calling the police' if kids misbehave and provides children and young people with direct contact with local Police Officers to build trust and mutual respect.

4. 4 Together Partnership Area Action Partnership

Days of our Lives – Delivered by Enter Community

The Days of our lives project enabled Enter Community Interest Company (CIC) to host and organise a number of events for the elderly residing in the local 4 Together community.

The events have ranged from informal get togethers to large scale performance events including commemorative events for World War 1 and festive events.

Every event has provided a unique opportunity for the elderly to come together and to enjoy entertainment and conversation from yesteryear.

These types of events are vital in communities such as the 4 Together Partnership area because much of the entertainment and social opportunities that currently exist are not currently geared towards the elderly. The events were particularly popular because they were often scheduled during the day at a time when the elderly are willing to come out of their homes and feel quite safe doing so.

The project enabled people from local residential homes to come out of their care homes to attend an organised event and to mix with the local community. This project had a massive positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the elderly in the 4 Together Partnership area. 210 people attended, and 6 people

were involved in voluntary work. Due to demand the project extended to cover the festive season.

Activity co-ordinators at the care homes commented on the fact that these events were having a positive impact on the wellbeing of their residents. It also helped to engage those who feel socially isolated in the community and gave the elderly something to look forward to and something which is conducted in a safe environment where attendees felt comfortable and relaxed.

5. Spennymoor Area Action Partnership

Sponsor a Grown Up - Delivered by Success North East

This programme engaged young people and their adult relatives in physical activity together. The programme helped increase participant's physical activity levels as well as providing opportunities for families to spend quality time together in a fun activity. The 'Sponsor a Grown Up' project was successfully piloted in the Spennymoor AAP area in 2014/2015 where 13 different activities were offered to 390 participants and the project proved extremely popular with families and providers. The project was extended in 2016/17 to look at engaging new families and local sports clubs to enable additional FREE family physical activity sessions.

Success North East worked with schools, nurseries and professional staff to identify young people to 'sponsor' an adult relative to take part in physical activity with them, as well as supporting sports clubs, coaches and multi-agency professionals to address any barriers and issues that prevented young people and adults engaging in physical activity.

Spennymoor AAP helped financially support the 'Sponsor a Grown Up' project with funding from the Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield Clinical Commissioning Group Fund.

After being successfully delivered in the Spennymoor AAP area, the 'Sponsor a Grown Up' programme then went on to be delivered in the East Durham Rural Corridor, 4 Together and Great Aycliffe and Middridge AAPs.

6. Teesdale Area Action Partnership

Intergen Project - Delivered Teesdale YMCA

The YMCA Intergen project started in 2015 and has been going ever since. The project was originally funded by TAP; however, the YMCA has since continued delivery of the project with their core funding.

Intergen is delivered on the first Thursday of every month and sees a group of young people and a youth worker attend the Manor House Care Home to engage in a craft activity with the residents of the care home. The young people help the older people to create something that they can then keep. This breaks down the barriers between the two ages groups and reduces the impact of isolation on both age groups.

What we also see is a dialogue open up between the groups. The young people learn songs from days gone by and particularly war time songs that the residents remember and learn about signs and symptoms of dementia and are then able to bring this learning into the community. We have been told by Manor House Care Home that the emotional well-being of the residents following a visit from the young people lasts for a couple of days after.

The young people, now more aware of dementia, offer support to those in the community that they recognise with the symptoms and it breaks down the stereotypes that both groups may have. Young people demonstrate more patience for older people while the older people come to understand what it is like to be a young person today. The Intergen project delivers outcomes and has an impact on people that we did not anticipate and would struggle to measure.

As a result of the Intergen project the Dementia Friendly Barney Group has been supported through the project with the young people helping to create Fiddle Mats that have been distributed to various care homes and community groups.

7. Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership

Beat the Scammers - Delivered by Age UK County Durham

Representatives from the Derwent Valley AAP worked with Age UK County Durham to create the initial 'Beat the Scammers' project concept and subsequently funded the development of the pilot project via the AAP Area Budget at a cost of £10,000 back in 2015/16. Aside from financially

supporting the project development, the AAP has helped to promote the scheme locally via its newsletter, community website, facebook page and wider networks and has also promoted its success to other partners. The project has since received countywide and national recognition from the BBC and Home Office having reached over 5,000 older people and installing 540 call blockers.

8. Durham Area Action Partnership

Cheesy Waffles Project – Delivered by Investing in Children

The Cheesy Waffles Project (CWP) provides activities for children, young people and young adults with additional needs.

They run over 10 different groups ranging from junior and senior youth clubs, making music, girls and lads groups, holiday activities and the wider world young adults group.

Activities include residentials, shopping trips, meals out, sporting activities and fundraising for other local charities. Their key aim is that all young people should have the same opportunities and be able to have fun.

Young people who take part gain new skills and develop their own independence. The group also gives some respite to families and carers

Durham AAP have funded nine different initiatives from CWP since 2015 with support of over £27,000. This has included:

- One to One Support – This has allowed those young people who need one to one support take part in activities with other members of the CWP.
- Making Music - Each year CWP puts on three musical events. This funding helped in 2015 for CWP to put on a production of Bugsy Malone.
- Photographic display – In 2018, members of CWP had taken part in a project looking at the home front during World War One. They recreated everyday scenes and photographed them. The display at the town hall had a small launch event and was very well received.

9. East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership

Plastic Fantastic – Delivered by OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists)

The Plastic Fantastic Project which is working with three schools from across the AAP in a pilot project. The project links pupils with older members of their communities, so that the young people learn about 'life before single-use plastic'. It investigates plastic pollution in their towns and villages and maps what impact it's having in their communities and then does something about it.

They engage with members of the communities including grandparents/great grandparents who will remember what life was like before plastic was so common. They also help pupils to develop their understanding through a social history project understanding how people lived before plastic, the impact of increased plastic use through time and the alternatives to single use plastics now. Community centres and voluntary organisations that work with elderly people will be involved to identify and engage participants who are willing to impart their knowledge.

As a finale for the project they will create sculptures from waste plastic materials that will be showcased at a celebration assembly and then exhibited in the schools. These exhibits will also, hopefully, be taken into local community settings.

As a way of enabling the effort and learning of the children to be recognised the John Muir Award will be used. This award is an internationally recognised accreditation for young people. The schools involved are Cassop Primary, St. Williams RCVA Primary, Trimdon Village and Sedgefield Hardwick Primary.

10. Stanley Area Action Partnership

Stanley Advice Centre – Delivered by various advice and support services

The venue in Stanley hosts the following advice and support services; Durham Christian Partnership's Durham Money Advice Centre and Foodbank, Citizens Advice County Durham and Durham County Council's Welfare Rights. Between them a five-day a week advice service is available for local residents to get help with a wide range of issues including: debt, money management, benefits, housing and income maximisation. Local County Councillors supported the advice hub together with Stanley AAP and Stanley Town Council. The advice providers are all active members of the Advice in County

Durham Partnership that encourages joint working between its members and provides 'no wrong door' access points to information and advice.

Stanley AAP have supported the Stanley Advice Hub via its Welfare Reform and Area Budget funding streams to ensure they are able to continue this unique delivery model in a Town Centre base where they can deal face to face with people in need. Stanley Advice Hub has supported hundreds of Stanley residents and their families.

11. Weardale Area Action Partnership

Wheels to Meals Project - Delivered by Weardale Community Transport

Weardale AAP looked at the issues around rural social isolation, and what was needed to support an individual to access some conversation and a meal.

During the winter months the cafes and pubs do not experience as much footfall and this presented an opportunity for a set price meal with confirmation of covers.

A programme of venues are agreed by the Meals to Wheels group, a set price is agreed along with a menu choice. At the beginning of each month a programme is despatched to interested parties, a volunteer phones each of the clients on the mailing list to firstly have a chat and see which element of the programme is of interest. This is an integral part of the programme, because the friendly voice at the end of the phone makes all the difference. The route is then planned, and clients get a call to let them know what time they will be collected.

The Weardale community are a strong group and does not take to charity very well, however, because the set meal was at a reasonable price, they would be happy to pay. The AAP monies helped to reduce the mileage cost.

The journey to the venue enables old friends to catch up and new friendships are forged. The Wellness coordinator from the Wellbeing 4 Life service and the money advice worker, all connect into the service, and are familiar faces. This is needed to build traction and trust, so if an issue presents itself the workers can step in quickly and confidentially.

12. 3 Towns Partnership Area Action Partnership

The Victory Programme – Delivered by the Salvation Army Crook Corps

The Victory Programme started in February 2014 and is a “Free, Fun, second world war social experience”

It is broken down into 3 Main areas:

- Eat for Victory- everyone has their own work station and together they cook a meal based on a WW2 recipe. They take the meal home to share with their families and the ingredients to be able to make it again.
- Budget for Victory- Each participant is given the skills and a ‘Tool Kit’. To enable them to set up a personal budget. As a group they talk about the ways they can save money on grocery shopping, energy bills etc
- Digging for Victory- The group discuss the ways they can grow their own food even if they don’t have a garden or outside Space.

In 2017, the programme was expanded, developing a holiday victory programme for families as part of our 3 Towns targeted holiday activities programme putting on a range of stimulating activities that always includes food for everyone. Families are now having fun learning cooking skills together.

The 29th course is just about to finish and has seen 171 individuals take part, with the youngest aged 17 the oldest aged 92. Through the Victory for Families expansion 53 Families, 82 Adults and 119 children have benefited.

As well as the practical life skills of budgeting and cooking the programme participants have reported on the importance of social company; better self-esteem; pride in themselves and increased confidence.

With the cost of living going up and up, many families and individuals find it harder to make ends meet. This programme shares expertise and draws inspiration from the past to help make a practical difference to people’s lives now.

The project started in the 3 Towns area in 2014 and has been sustained ever since. It has been rolled out to Blaydon and Southwick in the North East and currently a toolkit is being developed to share UK wide to allow others to set up and run their own Programme. The 3 Towns Partnership has supported the programme with funding; marketing; development of the family programme and partnership links.

13. Mid Durham Area Action Partnership

Intergenerational and Community Buildings Project – Delivered by Age UK County Durham and 4 Communities

Mid Durham AAP were 'split' in terms of which project they wanted to see go forward as they both had high value, so decided to 'combine' two distinct projects but complimentary to each other.

The intergenerational element was delivered by Age UK County Durham and the Community Buildings project was delivered by 4 communities in Hamsteels (Hamsteels Community Centre), Burnhope (Burnhope Community Centre), St John's in Meadowfield (opening soon) and The Young Farmers Community building called 'Elsdon Lodge' in Buttsfield.

Mid Durham AAP financially supported the intergenerational project and helped link Age UK County Durham to the community facilities and networks within the area to aid them in making contacts and connections. The AAP through the children and young people's task group helped to guide the project in gathering local information and additional support from local organisations.

The AAP made a significant financial and team support contribution to the 4 new community buildings that have been built in more recent years of the AAPs operation. The AAP has contributed £55k across these buildings (alongside county councillor contributions of £47k) which has yielded a further £1.86 million into these buildings from partner organisations, parish councils and charitable and lottery funding, so gaining a 95% return for a 5% investment. Alongside this the team have contributed hundreds of hours of work in supporting those communities to achieve their aspirations.

14. East Durham Area Action Partnership

'Welfare Champions' – Delivered by the East Durham Trust

This is in recognition of the work undertaken by volunteers under the guidance of East Durham Trust in supporting people experiencing severe hardship as a result of austerity measures and the introduction of Universal Credit.

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**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

23 July 2019

**Year end, 2018/19
Customer Feedback Report**



Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources

Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Joy Allen, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Members the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for 2018/19 (full report attached at Appendix 2).

Executive Summary

- 2 The report (attached at Appendix 2) brings together a range of information collected from our customers which highlights their experiences of using our services during 2018/19.
- 3 The report includes a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes, an overview of comments relating to our policies, procedures and decision-making, a summary of customer satisfaction through compliments and surveys, and our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and corporate). The report also highlights recent customer developments.
- 4 We will use information from this report to further develop our services, inform policy decisions and our transformation programme, and support the use of digital tools, techniques and processes to improve the customer experience.

- 5 We will continue to work, throughout 2019/20, to improve the consistency and quality of the data in this report, as well as the range of customer feedback.

Recommendation

- 6 Members are recommended to note the information in the report.

Background

- 7 Successful organisations understand their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback. This information, provided by customers as to whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services and about their general experience, is a resource for improving customer experience and determining our actions in line with our customers' needs.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Previous Customer Feedback reports

Contact: Victoria Murray

Tel: 03000 267 707

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report

Consultation

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

None

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None

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Putting our customers first

Customer Feedback Report

Complaints, compliments and suggestions

Year-end,
2018/19

Altogether better

Background Information

- 8 Customer feedback is a valuable tool. It not only helps us to understand what is important to service users and what we are doing well, it can also indicate any issues and offer us the opportunity to put things right and improve our services.
- 9 Covering a range of customer feedback, this report highlights the main themes identified during 2018/19, with a focus on quarter four. As feedback can highlight opportunities for operational improvement, the report includes a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes, an overview of comments relating to our decision-making and a summary of customer satisfaction through compliments and surveys. It also summarises our performance in dealing with complaints, identifies any lessons learned and states what remedial action we have taken, or plan to take, to put things right and ensure similar mistakes are avoided in the future.
- 10 The following summarises customer feedback for 2018/19, compared to the same period last year:



* partially or fully

Recent Customer Developments

- 11 During 2018/19, we utilised customer feedback to inform our transformation programme and support the use of digital tools, techniques and processes to improve the customer experience. Examples included enhancing communication through SMS bulk-messaging, supporting ease of access via voice recognition call transfer and reducing processing and service delivery times through automated enquiry handling and Robotic Process Automation.
- 12 Many of our service requests are now instantly received by frontline operatives, which has reduced double entry in the back office, and software installed in our fleet vehicles is helping optimise routes / work programmes. These initiatives are facilitating real-time progress updates to the customer.
- 13 During 2018/19, we sought views of both public and employees on how we use digital technology and the areas we need to develop. We have used this feedback to develop our new Digital Strategy.

Customer suggestions

- 14 We believe suggestions are essential to the ongoing development and improvement of our services and carefully consider all received. During 2018/19 we received 507 suggestions.
- 15 Almost one third related to our Waste Collection and Clean and Green teams.
- 16 Although we consider every suggestion, not all can be implemented. For example, we regularly receive suggestions that propose changes to our road system. However, when looked at in context of countywide traffic flows, many would have knock on effects to the traffic flows elsewhere if they were to be implemented. Removing the £20 replacement bin charge for customers subscribing to our garden waste scheme is also not possible as the garden waste charge only covers the service, not the actual bin.
- 17 A sample of suggestions received during quarter four and our response is attached at Appendix 1.

Customer feedback relating to our policies and procedures

- 18 Our service provision reflects our policies and procedures, and during 2018/19 we received 213 items of feedback as a direct consequence of carrying out actions in line with these policies and procedures. We use this feedback to inform our policies and procedures at their review.

- 19 Just over half of this feedback (115 contacts) can be attributed to our Refuse and Recycling Service, a third of which was due to our policy of not emptying contaminated bins (although this was 102 contacts fewer than 2017/18).
- 20 Other contact covered a wide range of issues in small numbers. These included: the removal of lights as part of the street light energy reduction programme, the requirement to leave bulky waste at the designated bin collection point; not collecting side waste; refusing a request for an additional bin and not collecting recycling in black bags.

Customer feedback relating to our decision making

- 21 198 contacts, during 2018/19, objected to decisions we had made. Two thirds related to operational decisions, mainly in response to a decision from planning, enforcement or highways works.

Customer feedback relating to our fees and charges

- 22 During 2018/19, 105 contacts related to our fees and charges, which we review annually and allow us to provide local services that might not otherwise be possible.
- 23 Three quarters were due to dissatisfaction with the £20 charge for a replacement bin / new bin for a new build property (43 contacts) or council tax charges (35 contacts).
- 24 Most of the dissatisfaction with council tax charges (14 comments) was received during quarter four and referred directly to the 5% increase in council tax.

Compliments

- 25 We also receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide, and we believe that understanding what is working well and valued is as important as knowing what is not working as well.
- 26 Throughout the year we received 915 compliments; 215 in relation to social care service and 700 in relation to other services. Most related to satisfaction with service provision, but others related to specific individuals.
- 27 A small sample of compliments from quarter four, 2018/19 is attached at Appendix 2.

Customer Satisfaction

28 As part of the closure process within the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, our customers can now provide feedback, in relation to both contact and service delivery, for 64 different service requests. These are listed at Appendix 3.

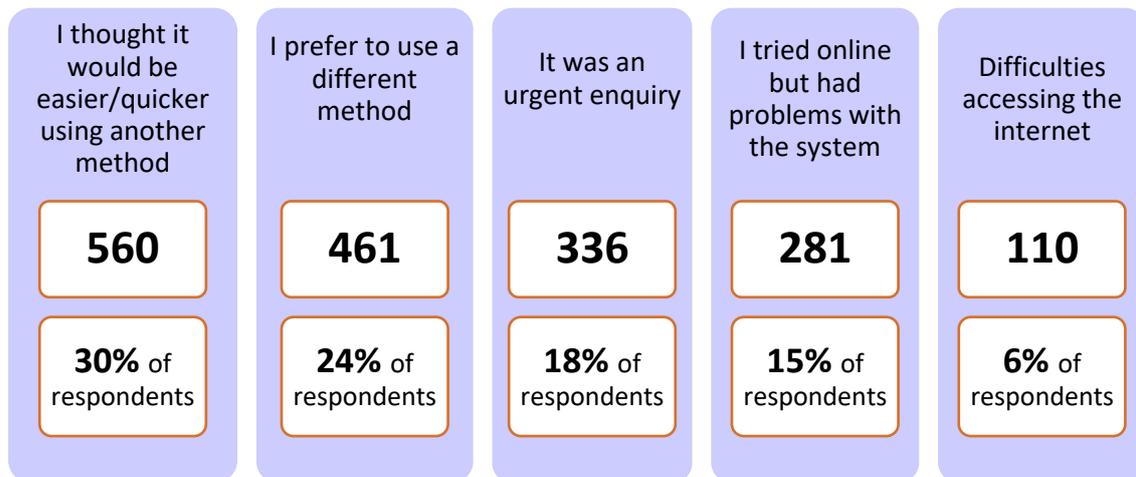
29 Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, we received 3,901 completed questionnaires through which customers rated their experience. 1,439 of these were received during quarter four. High level results are shown below:

91% found it easy to contact the right service	64% were informed how long it would take to resolve task	80% were provided with clear information
89% were treated with dignity and respect	68% were informed of progress	95% felt request was handled effectively and knowledgeably
84% were satisfied with the handling of their initial contact	76% were satisfied with service delivery	79% were satisfied with the time taken to complete the task

30 To drive further improvement, we asked customers who were dissatisfied the reasons why. In line with previous reports, the most frequent reason given was difficulty finding the exact option they required on the website. Other comments included being slow to respond, often resulting in the customer having to progress chase, not completing the task to the customers satisfaction, and lack of contact / being unable to talk to the specific person they required.

31 To further engage with customers over their appetite for online transactions, we asked customers who did not request service through our website the following question: You can request many of our services online through the council's website. Why did you choose another method?

32 We received 1,896 replies, 92% of which fit into one of five key categories, listed below:



33 We are using this feedback to inform our digital projects programme and will monitor the impact of the implemented improvements. Updates will be provided in future reports.

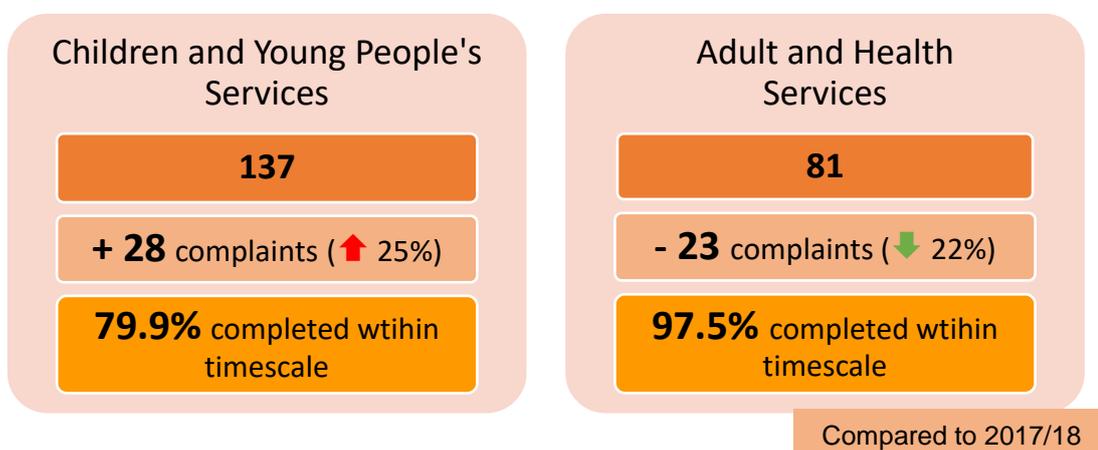
Customer complaints

34 Within this document there are two types of complaints; statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints. As each complaint type is subject to its own processes and policy, they are reported separately.

Statutory complaints (arising from our duties as a local social services authority)

35 At any one time, approximately 3,800 children and young people are being supported by a statutory social care team and at the end of quarter four there were more than 18,500 Adults Services clients with open cases.

36 The following summarises statutory complaints received during 2018/19:



- 37 In line with the requirements of the regulations for statutory complaints, full details of representations for 2018/19 are included in reports at appendices six and seven.

Children and Young People's Services

- 38 The majority (80%) of these complaints related to Families First teams (110). The most common reason for complaint was 'lack of communication' (40), followed by 'speed of service' (12).
- 39 During quarter four, actions taken in response to complaints received included;
- (a) Incorporating anonymised complaints into a training session for social workers.
 - (b) Amending Special Guardianship Order (SGO) procedures and scheduling staff training following a complaint regarding the administration of payments.
 - (c) Implementing "Signs of Safety" across the service. This new model of social work practice supports staff to improve relationships, and thereby communication, with parents and children.

Adult and Health Services

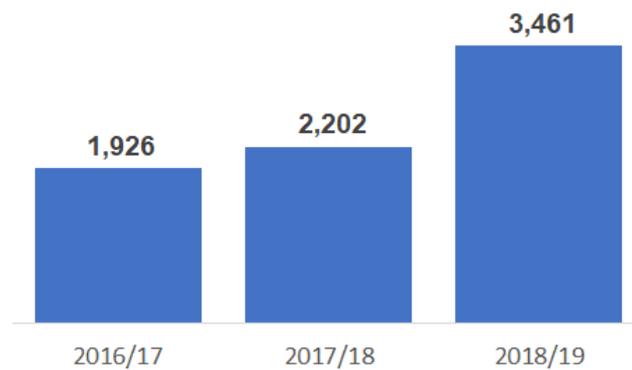
- 40 Almost half (48%) the complaints received during 2018/19 related to Older People / Physical Disabilities / Sensory Impairment (39). A further 21% related to Learning Disabilities / Mental Health / Substance Misuse (17).
- 41 The most common reason for complaint was a disputed decision where a service user disagreed with an explanation or decision (24) followed by lack of communication (12) and staff attitude (12).
- 42 12 complaints related to external providers.
- 43 During quarter four, actions taken in response to complaints received included:
- (a) Reiterating that should a service user (or their representative) refer to an issue as a complaint, either verbally or in writing, it should be considered as such. If a care provider decides it should not be dealt with under their complaint procedure, the complainant should be notified in writing with a brief explanation for this decision.
 - (b) Reiterating that correspondence relating to complaints should always be accessible, not only to the compliance officer/manager, but other

appropriate staff so that it can be accessed when staff are absent or leave the company.

- (c) Reminding staff that the names and contact details of family members should be checked and accurately recorded on documents.

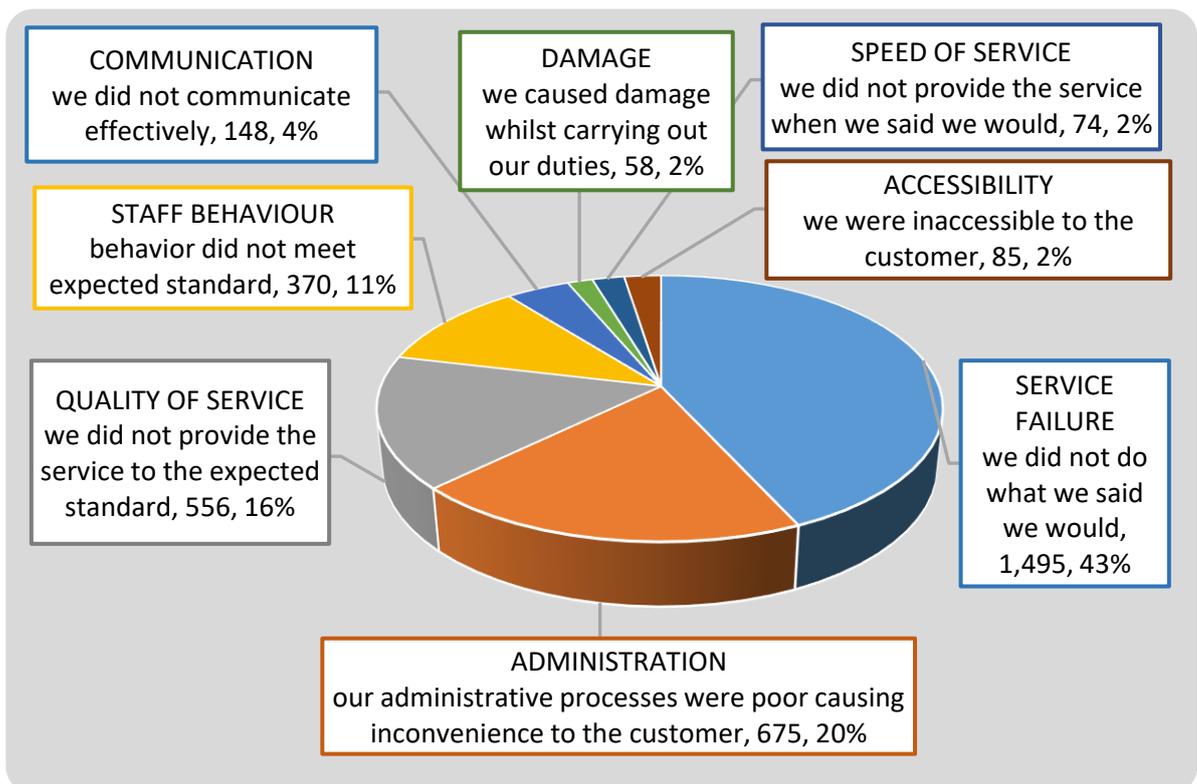
Corporate Complaints

44 During 2018/19, we received 3,461 corporate complaints, which is almost 60% more than we received in 2017/18 and almost 80% higher than 2016/17.

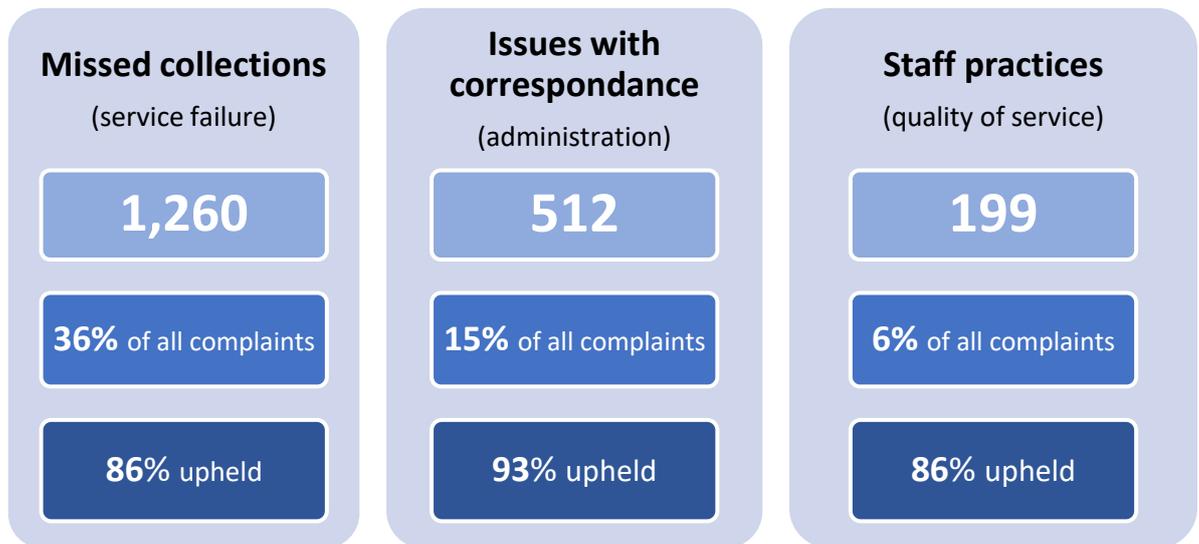


45 The increases experienced over the last two years can mainly be attributed to a change in the complaints process which re-categorised disputed missed collection service requests as complaints (+657) and increased activity around contamination issues (+460). It is also, to a lesser extent, a reflection of the increased demand for specific service requests following the launch of do-it-online and the inclement weather experienced in 2017/18.

46 During 2018/19, the eight main causes for complaint were as follows:



47 However, almost 60% complaints related to one of the following three specific areas.



48 In line with previous reports, missed collections continue to be our most frequent cause of complaint. However, it should be noted that in any 12-month period this highly visible frontline service completes more than 12 million refuse and recycling collections, almost a million garden waste collections and 32,000 bulky collections.

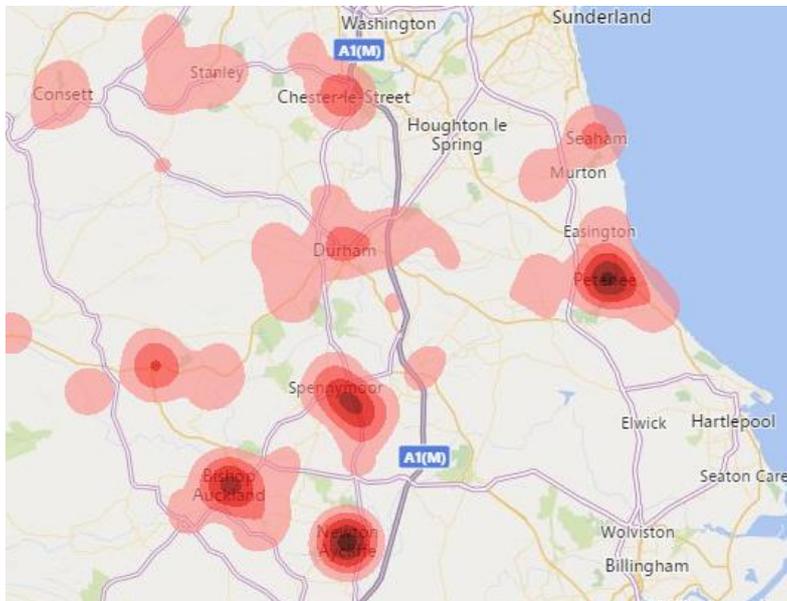
49 During 2018/19, missed collection complaints almost doubled (+657) compared to 2017/18. This increase was a consequence of a change to the complaints process in November 2017 which re-categorised disputed missed collection service requests as complaints.



50 This change increased visibility of this complaint type, allowing us to identify hotspots and key trends and drive discussions with the refuse and recycling team. By addressing and better managing the disputed missed collections (which mainly related to contamination) we have been able to reduce the number of complaint investigations carried out by the operational team,

thereby freeing up more operational capacity, and maintain a downward trend in contact of this type throughout 2018/19.

- 51 Having mapped missed bin complaints, we know the largest concentrations are in the south of the county. We are targeting improvements in these areas through training and development of our crews.



- 52 We are also proactively contacting residents by text (where we are able) to inform them when we have been unable to access their street and empty their bins.
- 53 Of the 512 correspondence complaints, 485 were from customers who had received a contamination notice they believed should have been sent to somebody else (due to, for example, the bin in question not being presented or being emptied as usual with no contamination sticker placed on it). This is an increase of almost 460 complaints since 2017/18.
- 54 This increase has followed increased activity to reduce contamination. In addition to campaigns, door-knocks and sessions with community groups, recycling assistants are now accompanying bin crews on their rounds. Consequently, more contaminated bins are being identified. Of the 12,000 contamination notices issued during 2018/19, 96% reached the correct recipient. The disputed 4% are due to difficulties, more noticeable in back streets, identifying the house to which the bin belongs. Mistakes are rectified as soon as we become aware.
- 55 Staff practice complaints mainly related to our Refuse and Recycling crews not returning bins to Bin Collection Points. Complaints of this type doubled from 73 in 2017/18 to 133 in 2018/19.

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

- 56 During 2018/19, some complainants remained dissatisfied with their response and requested that we consider escalating their complaint to the Customer Feedback Team for independent investigation. Consideration was based on the service response, remedy already offered, and the reasons given by the customer for the escalation. All investigations should be completed within 30 days.

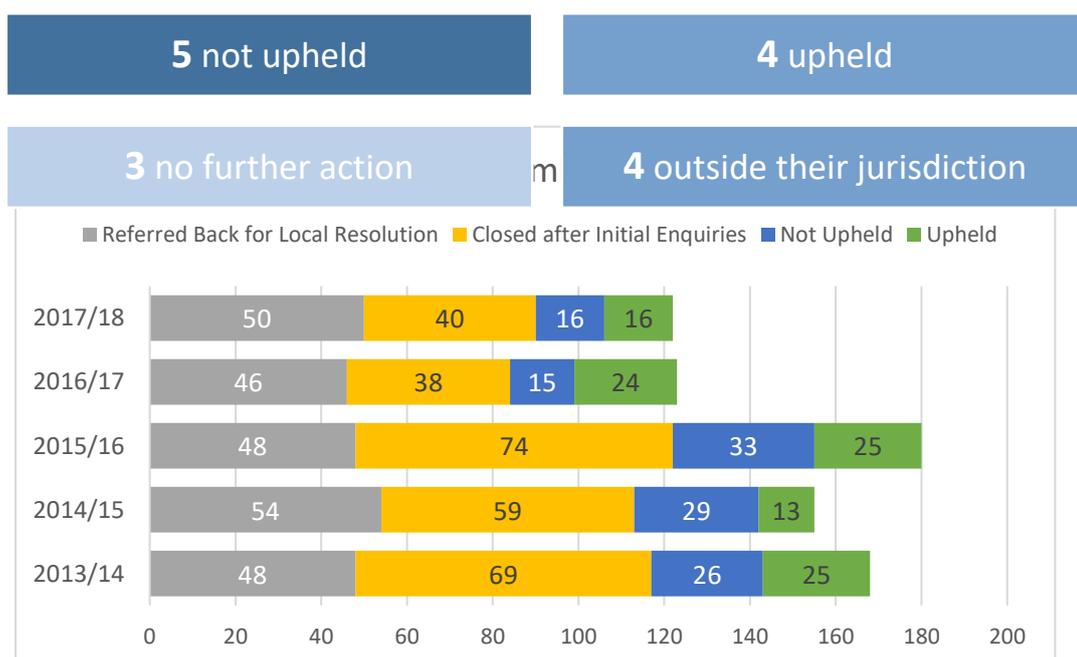


- 57 See Appendix 4 for details of complaints upheld by independent investigators during quarter four.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 58 During 2018/19, the Ombudsman delivered decisions in relation to 84 complaints. Conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants, and in some instances supplemented with contextual information from council officers.

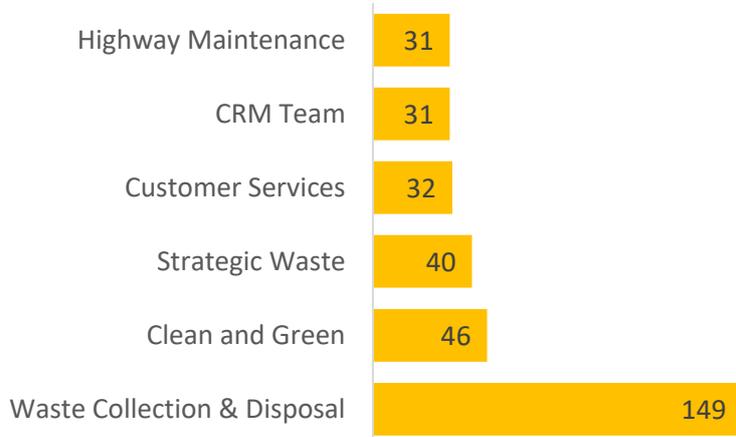
- 59 Of the 16 decisions delivered during quarter four:



- 60 Since 2013/14, we have seen a reduction in both the number of complaints referred to and upheld by the Ombudsman.
- 61 This decrease is a direct response to the robust approach we have taken to investigate complaints at both the service response stage and the independent investigation stage, as well as strong links with the Ombudsman to reduce escalations.
- 62 More information about local government complaint reviews is available [here](#). Benchmarking information for 2018/19 will be available in July 2019 and an update provided during quarter two, 2019/20.
- 63 See Appendix 5 for details of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman during quarter four.

Appendix 1: Sample of suggestions received during quarter four, 2018/19

Top 5 Customer Service Areas (2018/19)



You said: Customer suggested that we send a text message confirming garden waste receipt numbers as the automated payment line read the number too quickly.

We did: Payment options are fully established for the 2019 garden waste service, but we will look at the feasibility of including a text messaging service for the 2020 service.

You said: Customer would like Young Lifestyle gym membership to be made available at Consett Leisure Centre.

We did: We are harmonising gym products across the county and anticipate this will be available at Consett from September 2019. A project is underway to upgrade our membership management systems and ensure staff are suitably qualified to support this age group (11-15 years).

You said: Customer struggled to chase up an outstanding issue using 'do it online' and suggested we introduce a method to do this.

We did: We are reviewing the way we manage customer contact in relation to progress chasing and follow up and hope to have a new system in place by October 2019.

You said: Customer suggested that garden waste collections end later in the year as they are paying for a service and still make visits to the local recycling centre to dispose of garden waste between November and April.

We did: Garden waste collections take place during the growing season (April- November). There are no collections during the winter months because of the limited amount of garden waste produced. Garden waste during these months can be taken to any of our household waste recycling centres or can be home composted.

You said: Customer's bin was missed and was advised that crews will return within three working days. However, it was not explained that crews do not work on a Monday. The customer suggested this information is updated.

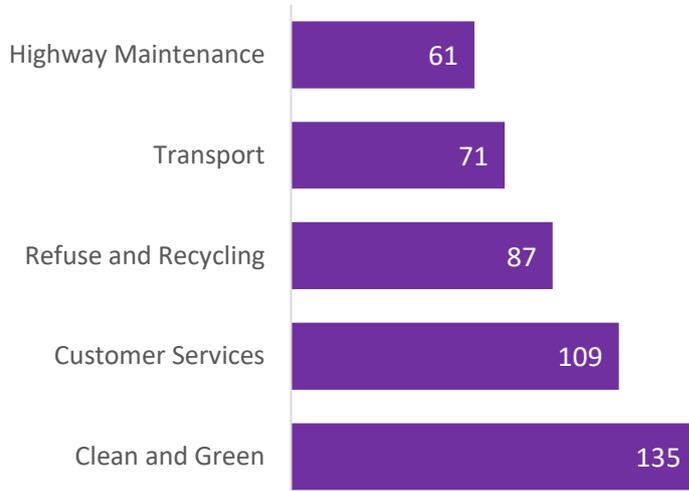
Our response: Our e-mail response system has now been updated to reflect that Mondays are excluded.

You said: Suggestion for a coffee machine to be installed at Crook CAP.

Our response: A coffee machine was installed when the library was first refurbished but was removed due to lack of use and health and safety concerns.

Appendix 2: Sample of compliments received during quarter four, 2018/19

Top 5 Service Areas (2018/19)



I would like to pass on my thanks for the quick response for cleaning up fly-tipped items

Thank you for speedily dealing with the graffiti in the North End and Whitesmocks area of Durham. An excellent job by all.

Thank you to the Clean and Green team for their prompt response in cleaning up the dog fouling.

I would like to thank council for the improvement in the street lighting on Garden Avenue, the road at the back of Newcastle Terrace

I just wanted to pass on my thanks again to the council men who helped me when I was stuck coming into Durham this morning! The road was horrific, and my car kept sliding which was extremely un-nerving. The men were helping people get up the hill (near council office) but took the time to come and guide me down the hill.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to your entire adult social care team for the excellent and timely service they have provided to my parents.

Last Summer we received a superb service with temporary carers, aids and equipment, OT and Physio helped them regain independence.

Most recently it was necessary to arrange carers once again on an urgent footing. I was most impressed at the speed of the response and the care and compassion shown.

Dear Staff of Crook Library,

Class 6H are writing to thank you for letting us visit the library on World Book Day.

We enjoyed the activities that you printed out linked to David Walliams and we loved our sweets and enjoyed our quiz.

Customer called to say thanks for the help that they received from the Care Connect wardens after a fall. They were very grateful.

Customer would like to give a massive thank you to the staff at the HWRC in Seaham who found their lost wedding ring. Customer is very grateful and would like this compliment to be given to the staff.

Appendix 3: Satisfaction questionnaires are applied to the following service requests

- Abandoned shopping trolleys
- Abandoned vehicles
- Access Bus
- Allotments
- Anti-social behaviour
- Barriers
- Bin – new, replacement, repair
- Bin – waste collections for businesses
- Bin – request help with your bin
- Bollards
- Bonfires
- Built structures
- Bulky Waste – white goods collection
- Bus stop and shelters
- Care Connect – apply
- Care Connect – VAT exemption
- Complaints
- Council tax account
- Council tax paperless billing
- Council tax – change of payment
- Customer Services appointment
- Dead animal removal
- Dog bins and litter bins
- Dog fouling
- Drainage and flooding
- Dropped kerbs and disabled ramp access
- Durham Institute of Sport
- Flyposting
- Fly-tipping
- Garden Waste – appeal /exchange your bin / join the scheme
- Generic enquiry
- Graffiti
- Grass cutting, shrubs and flower beds
- Gritting or snow clearance – request
- Gypsy, roma and traveller sites
- Invite out chairman to your event
- Litter
- Manhole and utility covers
- Needles and drug paraphernalia
- Noise complaint
- Road or footpath
- Roads or footpath obstruction – non-vehicular
- Roads or footpath obstruction – vehicular
- Road or pavement – spillage
- Road signs
- Roadworks
- Rubbish in gardens and yards
- Salt bins
- Sandbags
- Seating and Benches
- Spilt Rubbish
- Stray dogs
- Stray horses
- Street lighting
- Street name plates
- Taxis – report an issue with a driver
- Taxi licencing – vehicle
- Traffic safety and traffic calming schemes
- Traffic lights and crossings
- Tree or hedge pruning, removal
- Walls and fences
- Waste collection for businesses
- Waste permits
- Ways to wellbeing

Appendix 4: Independent Investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint	Action to be taken
<p>Complainant was dissatisfied with our decision to take no further action regarding implementation of traffic calming measures</p>	<p>We acknowledge that lacked transparency.</p> <p>However, although works are not as originally proposed, we are satisfied that the promontory constructed is more substantial than what was originally agreed.</p>
<p>Complainant dissatisfied with decision to hold landlord liable for council tax and lack of contact from Council Tax Office.</p>	<p>We acknowledged we did not respond proactively to the initial enquiry and did not initially recognise that customer was disputing liability.</p> <p>However, we have followed our internal process to reach the decision regarding liability.</p>
<p>We missed garden waste collections due to a payment error.</p> <p>Customer requested service provided free of charge 2019/20.</p>	<p>We apologised that a glitch in our CRM system prevented collections starting when they should have and have acknowledged that we did not provide our expected level of service.</p>
<p>Complainant was unhappy with services provided by highways team and contractor, and our response to their complaint.</p> <p>They believed equipment was unsafe, made several recommendations regarding how they felt we could improve our strategic approach to roadworks.</p>	<p>We apologised for the lack of detailed communication during the initial service request and subsequent contact.</p> <p>We provided feedback to the service and suggested that complaints regarding our contractors are managed with more contractor input.</p>
<p>Complainant is unhappy with quality of service from Archaeology Service and lack of allocated officer for correspondence.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that contact could have been made via a medium other than e-mail and apologised for the time and trouble complainant took in pursuing the matter.</p>

Complaint	Action to be taken
Complainant is unhappy not to receive a call back and requests compensation for cost of calls and lack of service.	We found no evidence of deviation from policy or process. However, we did not provide complainant with enough information, therefore poorly managing expectations.
Complainant is challenging Fixed Penalty Notice and was unable to speak to anyone using the telephone number provided on letter.	We found no fault with the actions that lead to the issue of the FPN. However, we apologised for the delay in issuing a response.
Complainant challenging Fixed Penalty Notice and time taken to respond to complaint.	We would no fault in the application of guidance and legislation, but complaint partially upheld regarding time taken to respond to initial complaint and further queries
Complainant paid for bulky waste collection, but believes item was taken by non-Durham County Council officer.	Investigation was not conclusive, but the service recognises the need for evidence-based collection to act as proof of collection where contention may arise. We apologised for poor communication on the day of collection, and time taken by complainant trying to ascertain whether we had attended.
Complainant dissatisfied with lane end refuse and recycling collection policy and its application.	Policy is being applied to all farms and isolated properties in the county, however we apologised for delays and communication breakdown.

Appendix 5: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>Complainant is unhappy about the lack of service provision for her severely autistic daughter since she left school. The Ombudsman has found the council failed to meet her needs.</p>	<p>We have apologised and agreed to make payment of £500 to acknowledge the impact of failing to meet her needs and in recognition of the support she missed out on.</p>
<p>Complainant is unhappy we disclosed information about a historic conviction to relatives caring for a child</p>	<p>We acknowledge we should have sought consent first and have agreed to review our policies. We have apologised and agreed to make a symbolic payment of £300.</p>
<p>Complainant is unhappy we did not take planning enforcement action against the change of use of a neighbouring property and noise from the property was disrupting sleep. Although no fault was found in how we considered the initial complaint, fault was found in how we investigated information received later.</p>	<p>We are remedying the injustice by carrying out further enquiries.</p>
<p>Complainant feels we failed to correctly address needs and identify eligibility for continuing healthcare by charging unnecessarily for care costs. The Ombudsman ruled we were at fault for not explaining care costs to the complainant</p>	<p>We have agreed to reduce the money owed.</p>

**Appendix 6: Annual Statutory Representations Report Adult
Social Care Services 2018/19**



Annual Statutory Representations Report

Children and Young People's Services



Annual Statutory Representations Report

Children's Social Care Services 2018-2019

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Introduction

- 1 Welcome to Durham County Council's (DCC) Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Annual Report which details representations (complaints and compliments) made in relation to children's social care services. It is a legal requirement for every local authority to produce an annual report about the complaints it has received throughout the year. This report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- 2 Durham County Council want every child, young person and family to be able to achieve better outcomes. When they are facing problems, the Council want to support them well to overcome those problems. We listen to children, young people and families to help us understand their experiences of the service, and we use this feedback to help make changes when appropriate. Having an effective process for managing complaints and compliments helps us to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard.

What is a complaint?

- 3 The Children Act 1989 states that a "complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response."
- 4 Guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE) called "Getting the Best from Complaints" was published in 2006 and helps local authorities to implement the Children Act 1989 complaints procedures with a clear emphasis on resolving problems quickly and effectively and learning from them.
- 5 The guidance explains that complaints can arise as a result of many matters relating to statutory social services functions including:
 - an unwelcome or disputed decision
 - concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service
 - delay in decision making or provision of services
 - delivery or non-delivery of services including complaints procedures
 - quantity, frequency, change or cost of a service
 - attitude or behaviour of staff
 - application of eligibility and assessment criteria
 - the impact on a child or young person of the application of a local authority policy
 - assessment, care management and review
 - control of parental contact with children in care

How does the complaints process work?

- 6 “Getting the Best from Complaints” outlines three stages which every local authority should have in place for the consideration of complaints. These are as follows:
- (a) **Stage one – Local Resolution**
The DfE guidance emphasises resolving problems quickly and effectively. Stage one of the process provides managers in Children’s Social Care with the opportunity to try and resolve complaints locally with the complainant.
 - (b) **Stage two – Investigation**
Stage two involves a full and formal investigation. In accordance with the regulations the investigation is undertaken by an independent Investigating Officer. An ‘Independent Person’ must also be appointed to oversee the investigation and report on the timeliness and transparency of the Investigating Officer’s investigation. Both the Investigating Officer and Independent Person produce reports, which are considered by a senior manager who then makes the Council’s response to the complainant.
 - (c) **Stage three – Review Panel**
Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the stage two response, then a review panel is brought together at stage three to consider the complaint. The panel consists of an independent chairperson and two panel members. All three members must be independent of the Council.
 - (d) **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**
The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is an independent and impartial organisation which acts as the final stage for complaints. The LGSCO will normally expect that a complaint has been investigated by the Council at all three stages of the complaints process before agreeing to investigate. If the LGSCO investigates and finds that the Council has been at fault they can ask the Council to put things right. This could include making an apology, making changes to procedures, or making a payment in recognition of Council fault.
 - (e) **Complaint Recording and Resolution in Children’s Residential Facilities**
All children’s residential homes have their own “in-house” complaints process to resolve ‘low level’ complaints. Residential staff work with the young person and allow them to try to identify for themselves how their issues can be resolved to their satisfaction. Information about these low level complaints is retained within the individual facilities and is available in the event of Ofsted inspections. If a young person wishes to access the more formal process (involving the stages detailed above), they can be assisted to do so with the help of staff or an advocate.

Support during the complaints process

- 7 To ensure that all children and young people have appropriate support should they need to make a complaint, the Council has a contract with Advocacy Services to support them during the complaints process.

Advocacy for children and young people

- 8 Durham County Council has a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide free advocacy services to children and young people who are looked after. Children or young people who would like an advocate can contact NYAS directly. If a child or young person makes a complaint to the Council, the complaints officer will provide them with information and advice about the advocacy service provided and where appropriate will contact NYAS on a complainant's behalf.
- 9 A child or young person making a complaint about a young carer's assessments can access a free advocate through an organisation named Rethink.

Advocacy for Adults

- 10 There are a range of advocacy services available to adults who are social care service users. During 2018-2019 these services were provided through Rethink.

Overview of representations in 2018-2019

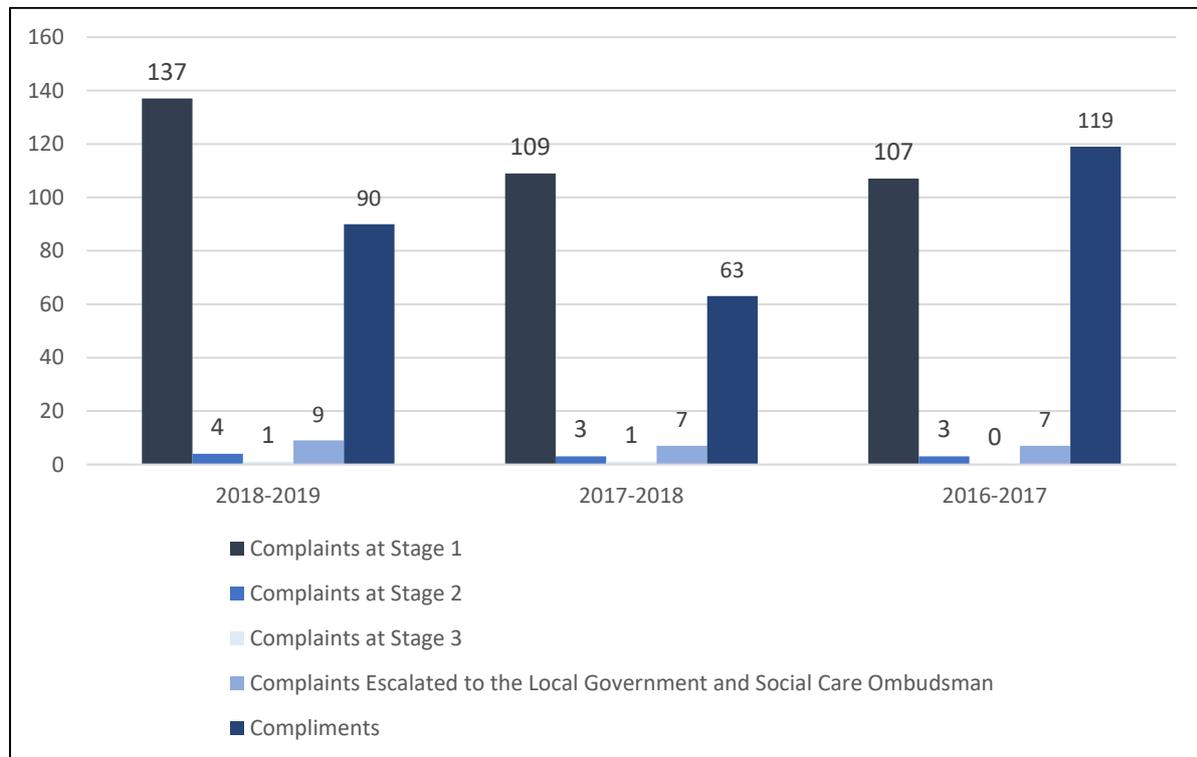
- 11 Chart 1 (below) provides an overview of complaints and compliments received between 2016-2017 and 2018-2019. The chart shows that the vast majority of complaints in all three years have been dealt with at stage one. Only a very small number progress to stages two and three or are escalated to the LGSCO. This pattern is in line with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance "Getting the Best from Complaints", which places an emphasis on speedy and effective resolution.
- 12 The number of complaints at stage one has increased by 28 (26%) in 2018-2019, having been relatively stable in the previous two years.
- 13 The number of statutory complaints received by Durham County Council should be viewed alongside the increasing number of episodes of children in need during the previous three years as highlighted in the table below:

Table 1: Number of Episodes of Children in Need 2016/17 – 2018/19 in Durham

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Episodes of a Child in Need in year	6,267	7,639	8,152 (provisional)
% increase		+21.9%	+6.7%

The number of compliments is higher than in 2017-2018 but lower than 2016--2017, and this is explained in more detail later in this report (see Compliments).

Chart 1: Three year trend in complaints and compliments

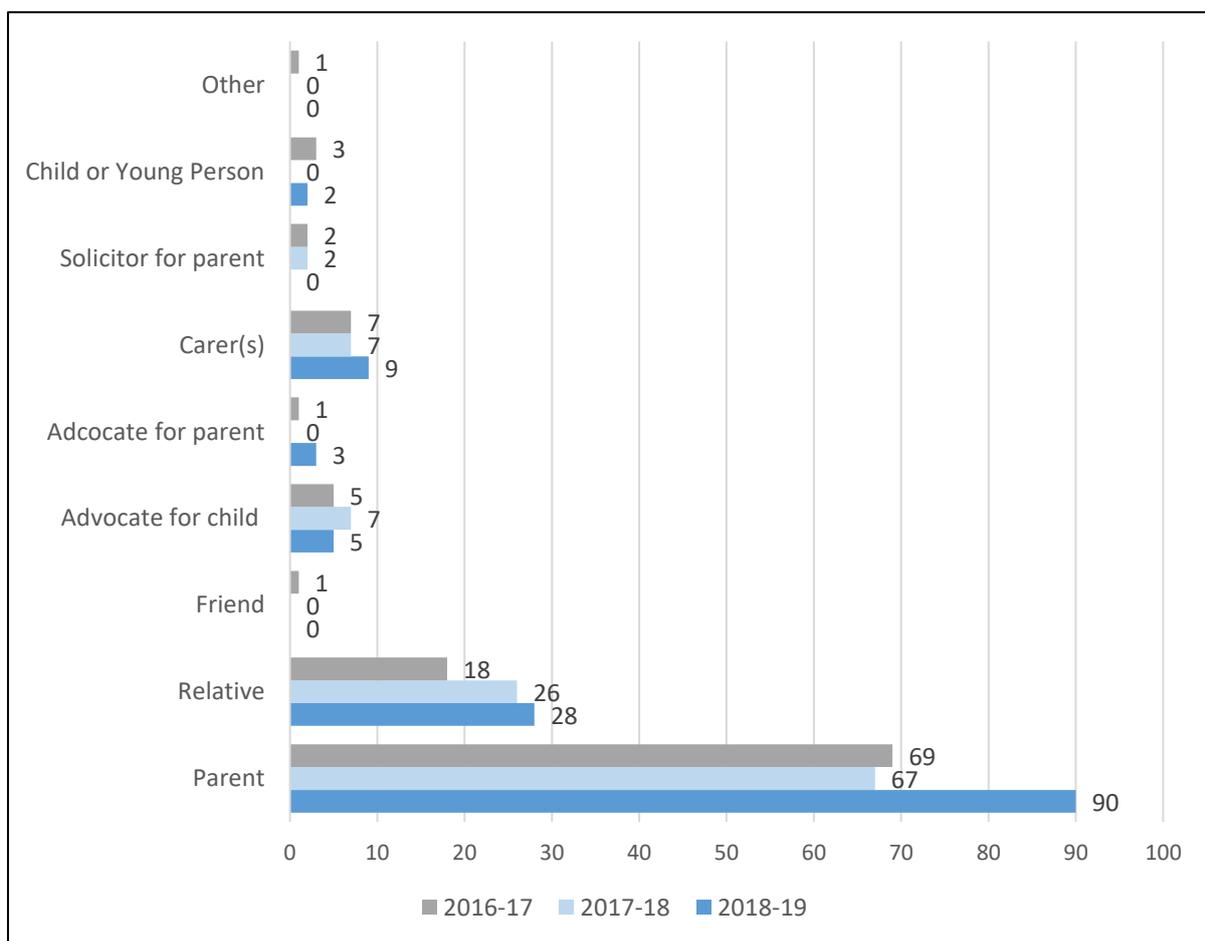


Who made complaints?

- 14 The local authority is able to consider complaints from anyone who has sufficient interest in the child or young person’s welfare. If the complainant does not hold legal Parental Responsibility the complaint can be investigated but a full response which would include detailed case information cannot be given to the complainant.
- 15 Chart 2 (below) shows that in 2018-2019 the largest number of complaints (65.7%) were made by parents on behalf of their children. This is consistent with previous years. The number of complaints from parents has increased by 34% in the latest year (from 67 in 2017/18 to 90 in 2018/19).
- 16 The number of complaints from “relatives” which includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and adult siblings has remained fairly stable in 2018-19 at 28 compared to 26 in the previous year.
- 17 Over the last three years, only a very small number of complaints have been received directly from children or young people. In 2018-2019, two complaints (1.5%) were received directly from a child or young person. The number of complaints made by children or young people through an advocate decreased to five (3.6%) in 2018-19.
- 18 There are a number of ways that the council ensures children are informed and supported in relation to the complaints process. These include:

- All children receiving a pack of information from their Social Worker, which contains information about how to complain. This is explained to the child/young person where appropriate.
- As part of their Looked After Review, children who are Looked After are sent a letter which advises them in relation to how to raise any issues they may be having at the Review. The Independent Reviewing Officer also offers a placement visit to children prior to the Review, where any worries or concerns are discussed and they are advised of formal and informal processes to make their views/complaints known.
- The complaints leaflet is available on the Children in Care Council website.

Chart 2: Who made complaints? - Three year trend

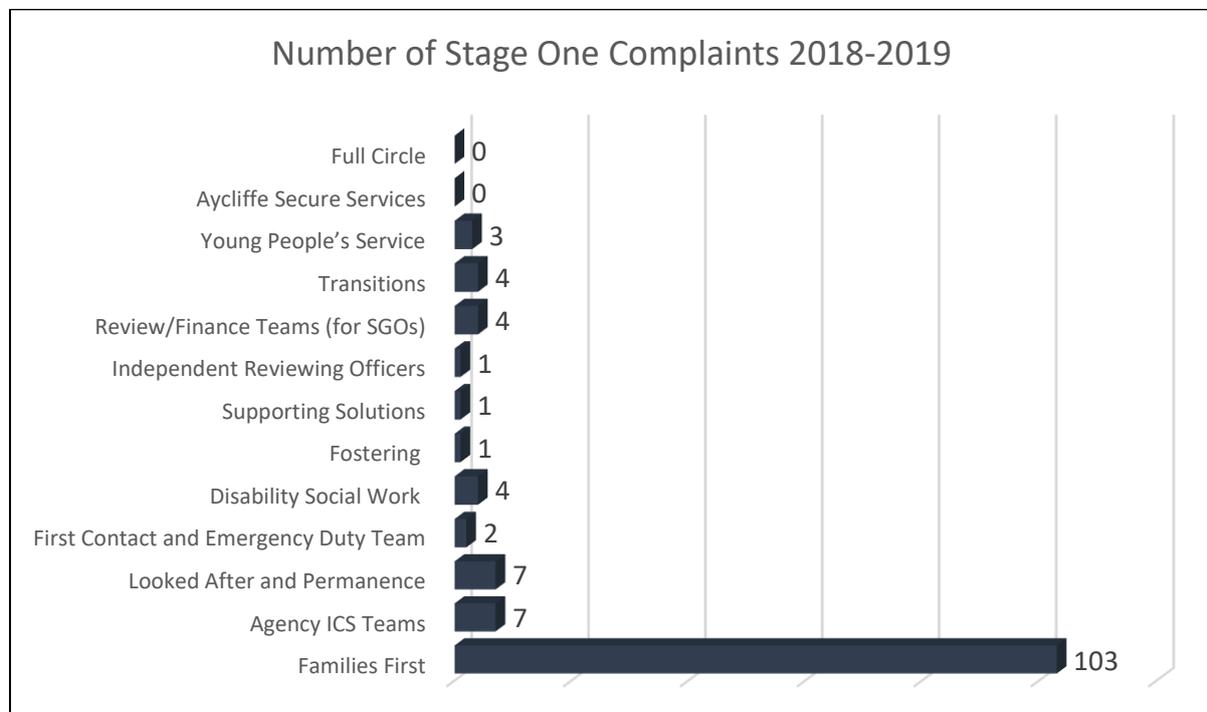


Appendix 1 provides statistical data about the profile of children and young people on whose behalf complaints were made in 2018-2019.

What were the complaints about?

- 19 Chart 3 below shows that in 2018-2019 the largest number of complaints (75%) were made about Families First teams. A further 5% of complaints were made about the Looked After Children service.
- 20 The high percentage of complaints received by the Families First teams reflects the size of the staff group and number of cases they manage, which is much larger than other staff groups in Children’s Social Care. It also reflects that these teams are more likely to be working with children, young people and families who may not all want social workers involved in their lives.
- 21 The Service has analysed this data at team level and implemented improvement actions for teams where there is a higher percentage of complaints. These teams have also had staffing issues over the past year which are now resolved.
- 22 The lower number of complaints from Children Looked After may reflect the strength and longer term relationship between the worker and child. In a recent Children Looked After Survey (56 responses from children), there was a strong response in relation to their satisfaction with their worker. For example, 92.2% of children responded that they ‘know where to go to get help’ and 94.5% responded that ‘my worker helped me when I needed them to’.

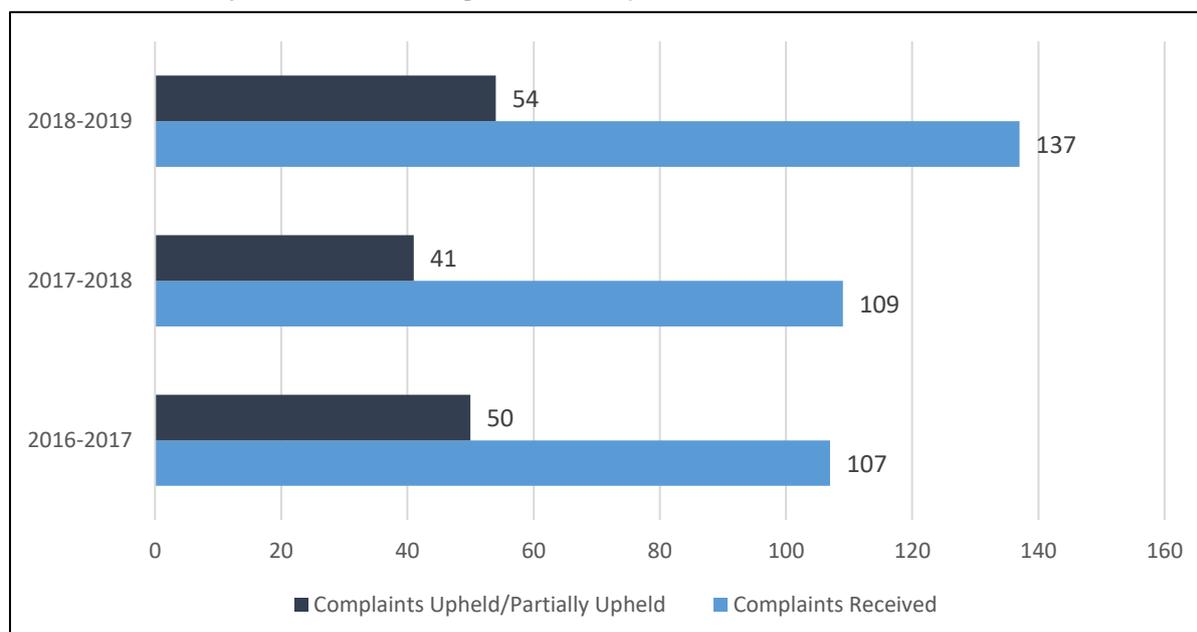
Chart 3: Which services were complaints about?



Complaints at stage 1

- 23 Durham County Council received a total of 137 complaints about Children's Social Care at stage one during 2018-2019. Chart 4 (below) shows that this is an increase from numbers received in the previous two years.
- 24 Although the number of complaints upheld or partially upheld has increased to 54 in 2018/19 (from 41 in 2017/18), as a percentage of total complaints received (39%) it is consistent with 2017/18 (38%) and lower than 47% in 2016-2017.

Chart 4: Three-year trend in stage one complaints



Note: There are 3 stage 1 complaints from 2018-2019 ongoing at the time of publishing this report

- 25 Table 1 below shows the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints at stage one by category over the last three years. This information shows that in 2018-2019 where complaints are upheld they are most often linked to the following categories:
- **Lack of communication** (linked to 40 complaints in 2018-2019), has been the largest category of upheld and partially upheld complaints for the last three years. The number of complaints in this category has more than doubled from the previous year, and includes 13 complaints relating to unreturned phone calls and messages.
 - **Speed of service** (linked to 12 complaints in 2018-2019) has increased significantly from 2017-18 (three complaints upheld) to become the second largest category of upheld and partially upheld complaints.
- 26 It is also significant that complaints about the **professional conduct of staff** have reduced to four complaints in 2018-2019, compared to 17 in 2016-17.

- 27 Learning and service improvement linked to complaints is outlined in a later section of this report.

Table 2: Number of Upheld and Partially Upheld Complaints by Category

Category of Complaint	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Application of service guidance/procedures	1	2	
Confidentiality	2		5
Disputed Decision	6	3	16
Finance - Assessment	2	2	
Lack of Communication	40	19	30
Lack of Service – change to clients service			1
Lack of Service – contacts/visits	6	3	4
Lack of Service – denied service			3
Lack of service – referral of concern not actioned	1		2
Lack of service – restricted choices of current service	1		
Provision of Service - assessment		1	2
Provision of Services – Placement Provision	1		
Provision of Service – foster care	1		1
Quality of Service – personal care	1		
Quality of service – personal financial issues	1		
Quality of Service – report writing		1	3
Quality of Service – transport			1
Speed of Service	12	3	7
Staff Attitude	3	5	6
Professional Conduct of Staff	4	14	17
Safeguarding	4		
Total	86	53	98

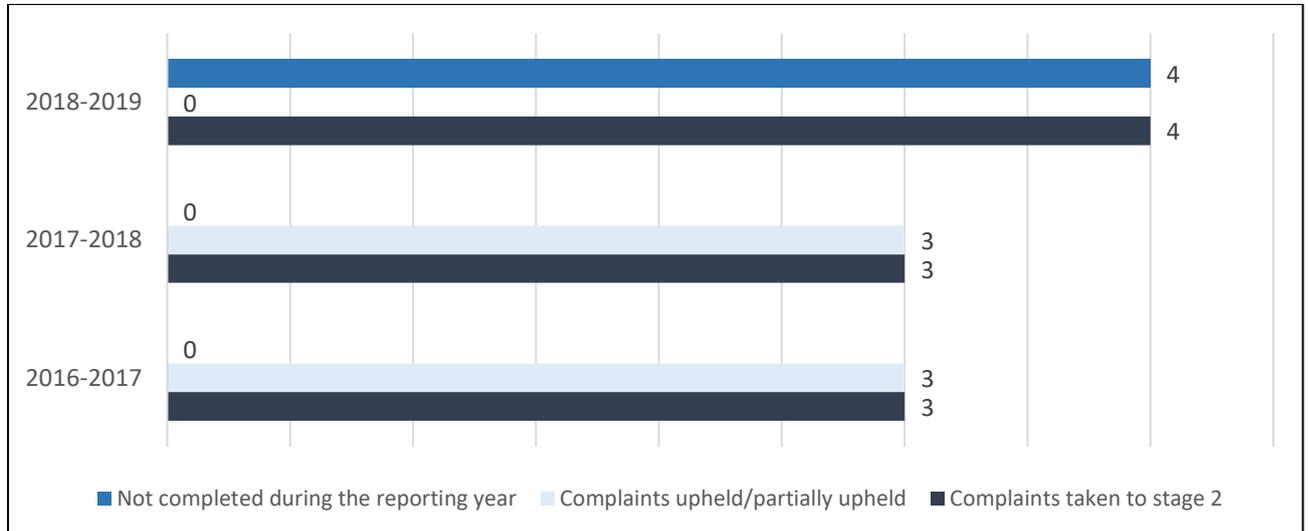
Note: a single complaint can have up to three categories of complaint.

Complaints at stage two

- 28 A total of four complaints were taken to stage two during 2018-2019, all of which are still in progress. Chart 5 (overleaf) shows that the total number of complaints taken to stage two has remained relatively stable over the last three years. This reflects the commitment of Children’s Social Care to ensure that complaints are resolved as often as possible at stage one, which sometimes includes arranging meetings between the complainant, Complaints Officer and a senior manager to enable resolution to be reached as quickly as possible.
- 29 Two of the four complaints moved from stage one to stage two when the complainant was dissatisfied with the response provided at stage one.
- 30 The remaining two complaints were taken directly to stage two. One was at the request of the LGSCO, where the Council was asked to investigate

elements of a complaint, while other elements were a matter for the court. The other was a very complex case where it was felt that an independent investigation was required to try to resolve the complaint.

Chart 5: Three year trend in stage two complaints



Complaints at Stage Three

31 It is rare that complaints reach stage three of the complaints process. In 2018-2019, only one complaint was escalated to Review Panel. The complaint received in 2017-2018 was partially upheld.

Compliance with Timescales

32 “Getting the Best from Complaints” sets out timescales for completion of each stage of the complaints process, and every local authority is expected to ensure that each complaint is dealt with as quickly as possible.

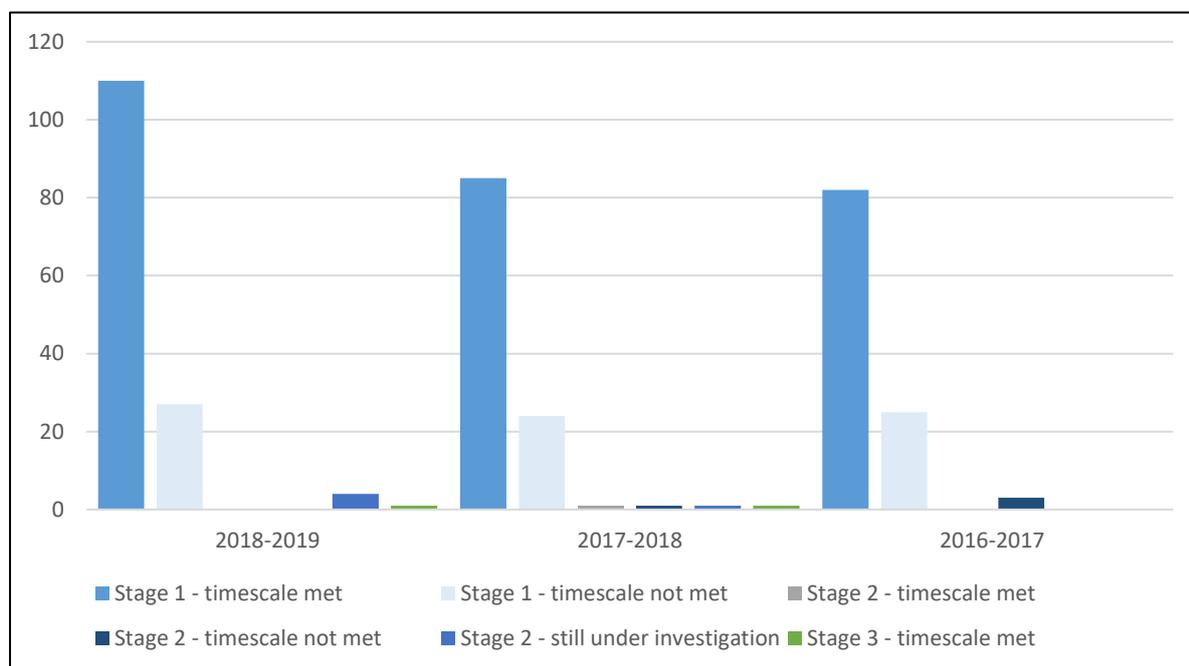
33 The timescales in working days are:

- **At stage one:** ten days, with a further ten days for more complex complaints or if an advocate is required.
- **At stage two:** 25 days with maximum extension to 65 days.
- **At stage three:** 20 days for the complainant to request a review panel, 30 days to convene and hold the review panel, five days for the panel to issue its findings, and 15 days for the local authority to respond to the findings.

34 Chart 6 (below) identifies that the majority of complaints were actioned within the set timescales over the last three years. In 2018-2019, despite an increased number of complaints at stage one, the percentage of stage one complaints actioned within timescale was 80.3%, an improvement from 77.9% in 2017-2018.

35 The Council aims to meet timescales wherever possible. Where a timescale is likely to overrun, complainants are kept informed, provided with a reason and advised of the revised timescale.

Chart 6: Three-year trend in number of complaints actioned within timescales



Complaints considered by the Ombudsman

36 Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint heard under the regulations, they can refer outstanding issues to the LGSCO who will determine a course of action dependent on the issues presented within the complaint. This can be done at any point of the process.

37 The LGSCO usually asks the Council what action has been taken and requests copies of any correspondence and reports. The LGSCO then issues a Draft Decision Notice, which the council and complainant are invited to comment upon, before the LGSCO issues a Final Decision.

38 Table 2 (below) shows the outcome of complaints referred to the LGSCO over the last three years.

39 During 2018-2019, the LGSCO contacted the Council in relation to nine children’s social care cases that had been referred to them. Although this was an increase from the seven cases referred during each of the previous two years, the number of complaints where the LGSCO has found the Council to be at fault has not increased. At the time of producing the report there were two cases where the council was at fault in 2018/19 which is the same number as in 2017/18. Two cases are still subject to further investigation.

Table 3: Outcome of complaints referred to the LGSCO

Outcome	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-17
The Council was at fault (financial remedy recommended)	2	1	1
The Council was at fault (improvements recommended)		1	
Ombudsman investigating – outcome awaited	1		
Premature (the Council was asked to further investigate)	1	1	2
The Council was not at fault	2	1	
Ombudsman closed the complaint without taking action	2		3
Ombudsman declined the complaint	1	3	1
Total	9	7	7

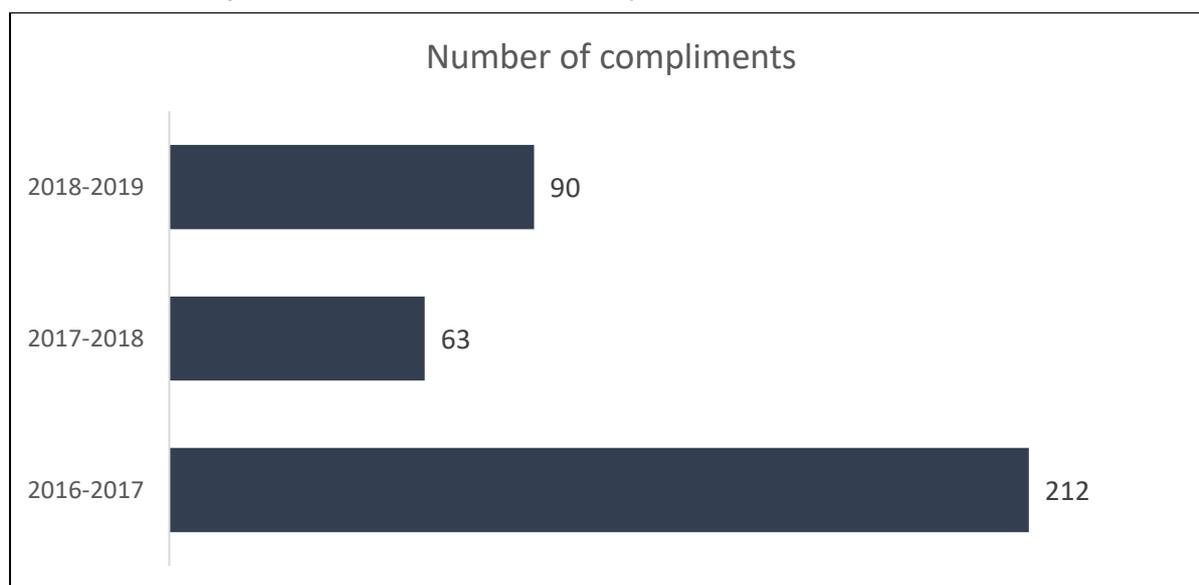
Compensatory redress

40 In 2018-2019 the LGSCO concluded that for the two cases where the council was at fault that a monetary amount was recommended and offered to each complainant. In one case £300 was recommended for distress, and the time and trouble pursuing the complaint. In the other case £400 was recommended (£200 for distress and £200 for time and trouble). Both complainants have accepted the compensatory redress.

Compliments

- 41 Compliments provide the Council with another valuable source of information about the experiences of children, young people and families. They can help us to understand the elements of services which are valued most and why this is the case
- 42 From 2016-2017, a revised definition of a compliment was agreed. Since that point a compliment has been defined as: *“a positive statement from a service user that had not been actively sought (for example by feedback form, questionnaire etc.). It can be verbal if it is recorded (for example in case notes) or in writing (for example in an e-mail, letter, thank-you card or text message).”*
- 43 Chart 7 (below) provides an overview of the number of compliments received over the last three years.
- 44 The chart shows a significant reduction in recorded compliments between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, which was due primarily to the revised definition of a compliment (no longer including feedback received via questionnaires or feedback forms). There has been an increase in the number of compliments received in 2018-2019 compared to 2017-28, particularly in the second half of the year.

Chart 7: Three year trend in number of compliments



45 Compliments continue to tell us that families, children and young people have appreciated:

- feeling respected, listened to and supported
- having decisions explained to them
- being kept informed
- having issues explained in a way a child, young person or family understand
- experiencing professional, caring and committed staff
- being able to contact staff easily

46 Examples of compliments received during the year can be found in Appendix 2.

Learning and Service Improvement

47 Complaints give the Council a valued opportunity to learn and improve. Many of the complaints received are linked to the practice of an individual worker rather than a service wide issue. As a result, learning is most often effectively carried out at an individual level and within local teams, where there are opportunities for staff to reflect and learn.

48 However, in some cases complaints can also indicate that there is need for much wider learning or service improvement.

Key Themes

49 The emerging themes from 2018-19 are as follows:

(a) **Areas for Development**

- (i) **Lack of communication** (linked to 40 complaints in 2018-2019), has been the largest category of upheld and partially upheld complaints for the last three years. The number of complaints in this category has more than doubled from the previous year.
- (ii) **Unreturned phone calls and messages** (linked to 13 complaints).
- (iii) **Speed of service** (linked to 12 complaints in 2018-2019) has increased significantly from 2017-18 (three complaints upheld) to become the second largest category of upheld and partially upheld complaints.

(b) **Areas of Improvement**

- (i) **Professional conduct of staff** have reduced to four complaints in 2018-2019, compared to 17 in 2016-17.

50 The above Areas for Development have led to service improvements such as changes to the training programme, or the improvement of a policy, procedure, or way of working. This section of the report focuses on the improvements made:

Training and staff briefings:

51 Complaints have led to a range of training and staff briefings being carried out in 2018-2019. This has included:

Upheld Complaint	Action Taken
Assessment timescales	The assessment and intervention training course was amended to include more detailed information about the importance of timescales for assessment, and a reminder to share the assessment in a timely manner with the family.
Families not being informed when cases are closed	The assessment and intervention training course was amended to ensure social workers understand their responsibility to inform families when cases are closed.
The approach to families who may be are under stress	Signs of Safety training has been rolling out to staff across the Service helping them to enhance their skills and confidence in building and maintaining collaborative partnerships with parents and children. This includes being mindful of tone and use of language, and to use an approach that is firm but hugely kind. This is also covered in training on Section 47 and assessment and intervention.

Upheld Complaint	Action Taken
Failure to share reports for Initial Child Protection Conferences in a timely manner	Staff have been briefed and this issue has been subject of quality audits and is reviewed by the quality improvement board for social care
Speed of service	Managers have been briefed on oversight of cases to ensure there is no 'drift and delay' when staff leave or are absent from work. In addition, a new case management IT System has been implemented which assists managers in adhering to agreed timescales
A family did not receive relevant information	Team managers were reminded to ensure that stocks of information packs for families are replenished regularly.
A parent was not informed how to make a complaint or challenge a conference decision	Independent Reviewing Officers were reminded how to action complaints about Conference decisions.

52 In addition, permission from two complainants has been given to use their cases for training purposes in 2019-2020. Both cases highlight how families were affected by the actions of Children's Social Care.

53 In addition, in 2019-2020 the Complaints Officer will be delivering training to support staff working residential homes to better understand the complaints process and best practice when dealing with complaints.

Changes to policies, procedures and documents:

54 In 2018-2019 complaints have directly led to, or contributed to, the decision to review and update policies, procedures and documents. This has included:

Upheld Complaint	Action Taken
The disclosure of information from a police check which was considered by the LGSCO	A new procedure and a supporting leaflet for families have been developed, explaining why a police check may be sought, and how the information received should be treated.
The administration of Special Guardianship payments which was considered by the LGSCO	The Special Guardianship Orders procedures have been reviewed and revised.
Families did not understand Section 20 well	Development of a new leaflet explaining Section 20 and which has been written in family-friendly language.

Updates to systems:

55 In 2018-2019 complaints have directly led to, or contributed to, the decision to review and update systems. This has included:

Upheld Complaint	Action Taken
Carers with Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders experienced delays in receiving payments	A new database has been introduced to process these payments efficiently.
Unreturned phone calls and messages	This is partly attributable to an issue with the telephone system which has been rectified. It continues to be monitored to ensure it is working effectively. However, there is also an issue around some staff not returning phone calls which is being monitored

Effectiveness of the complaints procedure

- 56 The effectiveness of the complaints procedure is reviewed every year as part of the annual report. This section of the report outlines the improvements to the process made during in 2018-2019.

Complaints made by children and young people

- 57 The 2017-2018 report highlighted that there had been no complaints made directly by children or young people during the year, and very few in the previous year. In 2018-2019 the complaints officer met with children and young people supported by Investing in Children (IiC) to review the “child friendly” information about making a complaint, and to determine if there were any further actions which should be taken to support children and young people to make complaints independently or through an advocate. As a result, the existing complaints leaflet for children and young people will be reviewed by children and young people supported by IiC, and uploaded onto the Children in Care website, which is used more often by children and young people than the Durham County Council website.

Change to the complaints process

- 58 The complaints procedure has been reviewed and updated and is now available to the public as part of a new web-based system for policies and procedures linked to Children’s Social Care. As a result, children, young people and their families can access the procedure easily.
- 59 An audit of compliance with the new procedure is planned in 2019-2020.

Appendix 1: Statistical Data

“Getting the Best from Complaints” requires that local authorities include a summary of statistical data about the age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants in the annual report. The complainant is logged as the child or young person, not the parent, family member or advocate who makes a complaint on their behalf. This data is recorded and reported using the details of the eldest child (if there are more than one children in the family who are receiving the service being complained about), or specific child or young person (for example, a disabled child within the family) making the complaint, or on whose behalf the complaint is made.

Table 4: Age of complainants

Age	Number	Percentage
Pre-Birth	14	10%
1-6	42	31%
7-12	43	31%
13-18	36	26%
Unknown	2	2%
Total	137	

Table 5: Gender of complainants

Gender	Number	Percentage
Boy	68	50%
Girl	66	48%
Transgender	1	1%
Unknown (unborn)	1	1%
Total	137	

Table 6: Disability of complainants

Disability	Number	Percentage
Disability Recorded	8	6%
Disability not Recorded	129	94%
Total	137	

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is not recorded unless it is of relevance to the child or young person’s complaint. In 2018-2019 there were no complaints where sexual orientation was an issue.

Table 7: Ethnicity of complainants

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White British	123	90%
Black Caribbean	1	0.7%
Mixed Race African	1	0.7%
Mixed Race Asian	1	0.7%
Mixed Race Caribbean	1	0.7%
White/Other Background	1	0.7%
Any Other Ethnic Group	1	0.7%
Ethnicity Not Recorded	8	6%
Total	137	

Appendix 2: Examples of Compliments

From a young person to a social worker in the Looked After and Permanence Service: “Thank you for everything you have done in the past 5 years, you have helped me so much. Yes I know it’s your job, or was, but you have changed my life. We have had many ups and downs where I have may disagreed with what you have said but in the end I know it’s because you wanted what was best for me. You know me better than I know me myself. You have watched me grow from a little girl into a stroppy teenager. I will follow my dreams and hopefully I will follow in your footsteps to become a social worker and do what you have done for me.... I will never forget you!!!”

From a child to a social worker in a Families First Team: Handmade card with a drawing on the front of the social worker and the child with writing inside “To [social worker], Thank you [social worker] of all your hard work from [child]”

From a child to a social worker in a Families First Team: “Dear [social worker], I love our chats about dad and [family member]. I absolutely love having you over to see me and my mammy and you are so pretty as well. Have fun! From [child]”

From a young person to a social worker in the Young People’s Service: “Just a quick little email to say a massive thank you for everything you have done for me since being my social worker you have changed my life for the better and helped me get somewhere where I will be really happy”

From a parent to a social worker in the Looked After and Permanence Service: “we couldn’t wish for a nicer social worker than you and I appreciate every last thing you do for me and my kids, and I will do all I can to help aid you in any way I can.”

From foster carers to a social worker in the Looked After Children Team: “merely saying thank you does not express how much we have appreciated all the help, advice and support you have given us. We have had some challenging times with [child] but you were an absolute rock for us, readily available with support and down to earth advice.”

From a family to a social worker in a Families First team: “We were to have you, to help us through all of the problems, thick and thin. We appreciate all of your kindness, you are a unique and kind person with a great personality, you made us laugh but most of all your smile cheered all of us up. To say a huge thank you and to say how privileged we were to know you. You give more than your job work, you give us the strength and hope we need every day.”

From a parent to a social worker in a Families First team: “In the past 15 months of working with you, you have helped me and my children with a number of issues including giving me the confidence to attend difficult meetings making them a lot easier.....you have always been patient and kind and helped wherever you could despite my difficulty and as a result I did eventually trust you and work with you much better. I would like to thank you for all the support you have given me and my family I feel you have helped a great deal.As a result of your support I am now able to cope much better and can therefore be a better mam to my children so your involvement has helped my family a lot. Thank you for everything you have done we are really grateful.”

From a family to a social worker in a Families First team: “I just wanted to say a massive thank you for all the help and support you have me and my family. I know I`ve been a total nightmare to work with (sorry) but you have never given up on me and that means a lot. My family have been through a lot and you have supported us through difficult times. I really appreciate everything you have done for us, you`re one in a million. Thank you for everything.”

**Appendix 7: Annual Statutory Representations Report Adult
Social Care Services 2018/19**



Adult and Health Services

Annual Statutory Representations Report
Adult Social Care Services 2018/19

Annual Statutory Representations Report

Adult and Health Services 2018/19

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Part One - Introduction

- 1 Welcome to Durham County Council's (DCC) Adult and Health Services (AHS) Annual Report which details representations made in relation to adult social care services. The report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- 2 The report is published under the provisions and requirements of the relevant regulations: the *National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*. This is a single joint complaints process for both social care and health services where there are no fixed timescales for managing a complaint with a greater focus on local resolution. If all proportionate resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can refer outstanding issues to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The regulations also introduced a duty for health and social care services to cooperate, should this be required, in complaints investigations.
- 3 This process aims to:
 - Make it as easy and accessible as possible for service users or their nominated representatives to raise complaints;
 - Foster an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently as possible;
 - Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling;
 - Resolve individual issues when they arise and reduce the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman; and
 - Enable the Council to identify topics and trends in relation to adult social care complaints and improve services as a result.
- 4 In recording and reporting upon the Council's performance in relation to the above, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to produce an annual report under Regulation 18 of the statutory instrument detailed above.
- 5 Other key features of the Regulations include:
 - the requirement for local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager; and
 - a 12-month time limit to make complaints.
- 6 During 2018/19 the Development and Learning Manager fulfilled the role of 'Complaints Manager' in accordance with the requirements of the regulations, with a Complaints Officer allocated to undertake the day-to-day supervision of the complaints function, both being independent of social care services' operational line management, thus ensuring a high level of independence in the way social care complaints are managed within the Council.

Part Two - Summary of key messages

- 7 The key headlines from this report are as follows:
- (a) There has been a decrease in complaints investigated, from 104 in 2017/18 to 81 in 2018/19.
 - (b) There was an increase in complaints that the Council declined during 2018/19, 11 compared to only 2 in the previous performance year.
 - (c) DCC AHS received 3 complaints where the contribution of colleagues from Health were needed to inform upon the Council's response this is in comparison to 4 complaints in the previous year. The Council led in these investigations and responded on behalf of all involved organisations in line with joint protocols.
 - (d) Older People/Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment received 48% of the overall complaints about adult social care services.
 - (e) A 'disputed decision' where a service user disagrees within an explanation or decision was the most common reason for making a complaint (12.8%).
 - (f) The LGSCO received 18 adult social care complaints during 2018/19 and reached a decision on 14 of these cases with 4 still being investigated at the time of writing this report.
 - (g) The service received 125 compliments about adult social care services during 2018/19, a significant decrease from 297 in 2017/18, due in the main to the outsourcing of some services previously provided through County Durham Care and Support.
 - (h) Complaints continue to provide invaluable information and learning from which adult social care services can improve. Some examples of which are detailed below:
 - (i) A briefing note was issued to staff to remind them of the importance of checking personal details to ensure they are correct before accurately entering these onto the Social Services Information Database (SSID).
 - (ii) Team managers were made aware that the IT Helpdesk can add an 'out of office' message to email accounts when staff are unexpectedly away from work, so service users contacting absent colleagues are given alternative contact details within the 'out of office' message.
 - (iii) An issue relating to the correct interpretation of Department of Health guidance was brought to the attention of all staff responsible for financial assessments. It was confirmed that the

Council intended to review all affected adult social care cases on a rolling basis as part of each individual's annual review.

- (iv) It was identified that a care home was not applying its falls policy correctly. The Council commission placements from this care provider so it was agreed that an audit be completed to review practices and improve adherence to policy and procedure in this area.

Part Three- The adult social care complaints process

- 8 When a complaint is received, it is risk-assessed to ensure that there are no safeguarding or other procedural issues that might supersede the complaints procedure and that it is within the 12-month limitation period. Consent must be obtained to confirm that someone making a complaint on another's behalf has been given the authority to do so.
- 9 Once the above determinations have been made, complainants are engaged in planning how their complaint is to be addressed and the timescales for doing so, along with what they hope to see happen as a result of making a complaint in the form of desired outcomes. A Complaints Resolution Plan (CRP) is produced which summarises this information along with the specific elements of complaint for investigation and the complainant is encouraged to suggest any changes to this document so it accurately reflects the issues they wish to be examined.
- 10 The Council's focus is always on the resolution of the complaint and engagement with the complainant in order to resolve matters to their satisfaction. Where resolution is not achieved, the complainant remains dissatisfied and the Council's complaints procedure is deemed to have been exhausted, the complainant is invited to raise any outstanding issues with the LGSCO.
- 11 Whilst a complainant can refer their complaints to the LGSCO from the outset, the Ombudsman will not usually investigate a complaint until the Council has conducted its own investigation and provided a response. In some circumstances where there has been a joint investigation with Health Services, progression may involve the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).

Part Four- Complaints made to the Local Authority (AHS)

- 12 We investigated 81 complaints during 2018/19, a decrease from 104 in 2017/18.
- 13 In addition to this number, 11 complaints were declined. One had already been thoroughly investigated by a care provider whose services had been commissioned by the Council and it was identified that further scrutiny by our Commissioning Service would not be able to substantiate the allegations made about a care home manager's interaction with the complainant or add anything further to the response already issued.

- 14 There were 2 complaints that were out of timescales with the issues being raised relating to events in 2014 and 2016, which could have been submitted at the time.
- 15 AHS received 2 complaints that did not relate to the service area and were therefore not matters for the Council to investigate, as one related to private law proceedings and the other to a cleaning service that was not commissioned by the Council.
- 16 There were 5 complaints that were made on behalf of service user's where the actual service user had not given consent for matters to be raised on their behalf, where they had the capacity to give this consent or to make a complaint themselves.
- 17 On a further 2 occasions it was identified that the service user did not have capacity, so could not give consent and in these cases a best interest decision deemed that the complainant was not acting in the service user's best interest and the complaints were declined.
- 18 In all of these cases the complainant was advised that they could ask the LGSCO to review of the Council's decision to decline their complaint. At the time of writing this report the Ombudsman has not approached the Council with an instruction to investigate any of these declined complaints.
- 19 AHS led on 3 complaints investigations that incorporated contributions from our partners in Health which included Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) and County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT). These 3 complaints are included in the figures presented in this report.

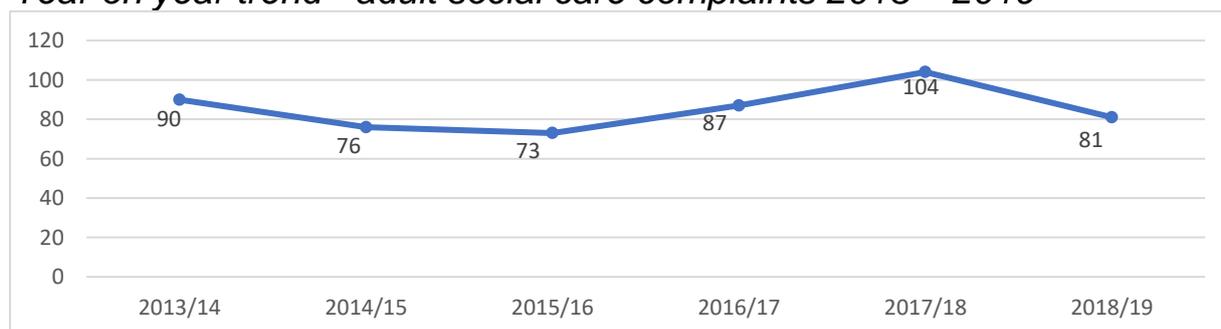
Number of complaints received by service area 2018/19

Service Area	Number of Complaints 2018/19	Number of Complaints 2017/18	% of Total Complaints 2018/19	% of Total Complaints 2017/18
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory	39	53	48%	51%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance	17	26	21%	25%
Commissioning	12	6	15%	5.8%
County Durham Care and Support	1	3	1%	2.9%
Safeguarding, Practice Development & Access	5	4	6%	3.8%
Finance*	7	12	9%	11.5%
Total	81	104	100%	100%

**Finance is no longer part of AHS but the complaints were regarding statutory adult social care services*

- 20 As in previous years, the service receiving the greatest number of complaints was Older People/Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment, followed by the Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/ Substance Misuse service area.
- 21 The graph below shows the number of complaints received by adult social care services over the last 6 years and illustrates that after a trend towards a reduction in complaints, submissions began to increase, only for these to fall quite significantly in 2018/19. This represents a fall of 22% when compared with the previous performance year.
- 22 The percentage of complaints for each of the service areas has remained relatively consistent whilst the actual number of representations has fallen across most service areas, with the notable exception being the Council's Commissioning service. Here, complaints have doubled from the previous year and account for 15% of the overall total. These complaints relate to domiciliary or residential care services where the Council had commissioned the service. The Commissioning service are monitoring closely the issues that are arising from this increase in complaints and working directly with the independent sector providers to ensure actions are being followed up.

Year on year trend - adult social care complaints 2013 – 2019



Complaints completed within timescales

- 23 Complaints Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed in all of the 81 complaints received in the year. The CRPs included a projected timescale for a response which was initially calculated based upon the perceived complexity of the case.
- 24 In 20 complaints investigations (25%), AHS needed more time to fully complete their enquiries for a variety of reasons such as the availability of staff for interview, unforeseen complexity, further information required from the Complainant and the need to seek legal advice.
- 25 In each case, the complainant was updated and fully informed of developments along with the new projected response date.
- 26 Of the 81 complaints received, 80 had been responded to at the time of writing this report with 1 investigation ongoing. Two complaints were not responded to within the projected timescale as one had to have the response formatted to meet the complainant's requirement for reasonable adjustments, whilst the other was a complex finance case.

Categories of complaints received and findings in 2018/19

- 27 When complaints are received they are recorded and categorised according to the subject matter of the issues raised.
- 28 Detailed below is the outcomes of complaints in 2018/19 in the associated categories (the highest three totals are shown in bold):

Complaint Category / Issue	Upheld	Partially U	Not U	Total
Application of Service Guidance/Procedures	1	8	-	9
Confidentiality	1	3	-	4
Discrimination	-	2	-	2
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an action	-	3	4	7
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an assessment	-	1	5	6
Disputed Decision – disagreement with a report	-	1	-	1
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an explanation or decision	2	7	15	24
Eligibility Criteria	-	-	1	1
Finance – Assessment	1	1	2	4
Finance – Charging policy	1	3	5	9
Finance – Direct Payment	-	-	1	1
Lack of Communication – no information received	-	7	2	9
Lack of Communication – not informed of meeting details/change	-	2	1	3
Lack of Communication – not updated about case	-	3	2	5
Lack of Communication – unreturned phone calls/texts	-	1	1	2
Lack of Communication – other	1	8	3	12
Lack of Explanation / Explanation not understood	-	2	2	4
Lack of Service – change to client’s service	-	-	3	3
Lack of Service – denied service	-	3	2	5
Lack of service – restricted choices of current services	-	1	1	2
Provision of Service – assessment	1	5	-	6
Provision of Service – equipment	-	2	1	3
Provision of Service – placement provision	-	1	1	2
Quality of Service – missed or incorrect medication	-	2	-	2
Quality of Service – missed/late domiciliary care calls	1	4	1	6
Quality of Service – personal care	1	4	-	5
Quality of Service – work of other agencies	-	4	2	6
Refusal of service	-	1	-	1
Safeguarding	-	6	2	8
Service withdrawal	-	-	1	1
Speed of service	-	6	4	10
Staff attitude	1	6	5	12
Staff being or seeming to be untruthful	-	2	1	3
Staff not acting in best interest of service user	-	4	5	9
Staff not adhering to statutory timescales or responsibilities	-	1	-	1
Standard of care	1	5	-	6
Overall total				194

It should be noted that a complaint can have more than one category assigned to it.

- 29 Of the top three reasons for a complaint, a *disputed decision – disagreement with an explanation or decision* was the most common reason 24, (12.4%). As an example, a service user’s application for a 1 to 1 support worker to assist them to access the community was refused and they wished to challenge this. This was also the most common reason for making a complaint in the previous performance year.

- 30 *Staff attitude* 12, (6.2%), where a service user perceives a member of staff to have been rude or disrespectful, was the joint second most common reason for making a complaint, the same as the previous year.
- 31 *Lack of communication – other* 12 (6.2%) has appeared for the first time in the top three replacing *disputed decision – disagrees with an assessment* which was the third most common reason for a complaint in the previous performance year. As an example, a service user’s daughter complained because the family were not notified when it was confirmed by the Court of Protection that the Council could take over the management of her mother’s finances.

Outcome of complaints by service area 2018/19

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total	Not Upheld as a % of Total	Upheld/ Partially Upheld as a % of Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Mental Health	3	18	18	0	39	22.2%	25.9%
Learning Disability/ Mental Health	0	7	10	0	17	12.4%	8.6%
Safeguarding, Practice Development	0	4	1	0	5	1.2%	5%
Commissioning	1	10	0	1	12	-	13.6%
County Durham Care and Support	0	0	1	0	1	1.2%	-
Finance	2	1	4	0	7	5%	3.7%
Total	6	40	34	1	81	42%	56.8%

(1.2% ongoing)

- 32 In 2018/19, more than half the complaints received were upheld in full or in part, meaning that the dissatisfaction reported by the complainant was justified in some way. Of the 81 complaints, only 7.4% of complaints were fully upheld.
- 33 Complaints that are upheld or partially upheld are of particular interest to adult social care services. In these cases, the service actively looks to identify what it could have done better and what action it can take with the aim of resolving matters to the complainant’s satisfaction.
- 34 These complaints give the service the opportunity for learning, on an individual level for example, where a social worker can be supported by management to improve their personal performance and sometimes across the whole service, where a policy or procedure is improved as a result of a complaint. Further examples of learning and service improvement as a consequence of complaints received are outlined in Part Six of this report.

Part Five - The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

- 35 Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint they can refer any outstanding issues to the LGSCO who will determine what action to take after considering the presenting issues.

Complaints considered by the LGSCO 2018/19

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Up	Not Up	Declined/ No	Ongoing	Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment	2	-	2	2	1	7
Learning Disability/ Mental Health / Substance Misuse	1	-	-	-	1	2
Safeguarding, Practice Development & Access	-	-	-	1	-	1
Commissioning	1	-	-	1	-	2
Finance	-	-	4	-	2	6
Total	4	0	6	4	4	18

- 36 During 2018/19, the Ombudsman reviewed 18 adult statutory social care complaints and had concluded their enquiries in 14 of these cases.
- 37 Of the 4 cases declined, closed or identified as needing no further action:
- In 2 cases, the LGSCO gave a holding decision as insufficient information had been provided to permit them to continue an investigation on the basis that the individual making the complaint did not provide the service user's consent or authority to make a complaint on their behalf about the services they had received. Consent in both cases was not subsequently forthcoming.
 - The LGSCO closed a further 2 complaints. In one of these cases the Ombudsman decided that the issues raised related to events in 2016, they were outside of the 12-month time limit for making a complaint and an investigation would be unlikely to add to the Council's investigation or result in a different finding. In the other case the Ombudsman decided that there was insufficient evidence of fault by the Council which had caused injustice to warrant an LGSCO investigation.
- 38 Of the 4 cases upheld where the Ombudsman identified maladministration and injustice:
- In one case, the Ombudsman reviewed the Council's response and the steps already proposed to resolve matters, concurred with the findings of the Local Authority's own complaints investigation and the remedy put forward in the hope of resolving the complaint. In essence they upheld a complaint that had already been upheld by the Council, where a service user had not been informed about the cost implication of moving from intermediate care to a temporary placement until a financial assessment was conducted. In resolution, the Council waived

the service user contribution to the costs of their care from the time they entered the care home until the date of the financial assessment, a period of 17 days, placing the service user back in the situation they would have been had the maladministration not occurred.

- The Ombudsman also examined a complaint about a domiciliary care provider commissioned by the Council. They found that the care agency's actions when a care worker attended a service user's home and could not gain entry had already been appropriately dealt with by the Council as a result of their own complaints investigation. The Council had remedied the injustice and addressed any service improvements.
- The Ombudsman found that there was a lack of service provision for a severely autistic service user since they had left school and therefore the Council failed to meet their needs. Provision had been provided at the time the LGSCO ruled on this case and the Council agreed to apologise and make a payment to acknowledge the injustice caused. This equated to £250 for the service user in recognition of the support they missed on and £250 to the parent who made the complaint to acknowledge the impact upon them for this failing.
- It was found that there were some periods where a social worker failed to keep in regular communication with a service user's family. In addition, fault was found with the care home where this service user resided, as the care provider had failed to adhere to its own falls policy. The Council agreed to apologise and pay £500 in recognition of the distress caused by these faults. It also agreed to remind staff about the importance of regular communication, to carry out an audit to ensure the care home is applying its falls policy correctly and to consider how care providers can report concerns more effectively.

Part Six - Learning and service improvement

39 Complaints provide invaluable information from which the service learns how to improve. Complaints also act as a prompt to ensure all staff work consistently to policies and procedures. Even where complaints are not upheld, full explanations, further information and often apologies are given. Some of the learning outcomes and remedies for resolution in the reporting year are as follows:

- A domiciliary care provider commissioned by the Council failed to appropriately deal with the presenting circumstances when a service user failed to answer the door to their morning care call. They also failed to effectively deal with a subsequent complaint about this failing. As a result of the Council's investigation, the care provider reviewed its call handling arrangements and customer care practices in order to improve both individual and collective performance. It also reviewed procedures and practices to deal with a situation where a service user fails to answer the door for a scheduled visit. All actions taken by the care provider are now formally logged to show that potential

safeguarding issues have been considered and any steps taken can be evidenced. It was impressed upon the care provider that complaints should be dealt with promptly, immediate consideration given as to how each submission should be investigated and appropriate action taken within 28 days as per the provider's complaints procedure. The Council's Commissioning service liaised with the care provider to monitor compliance and performance improvements.

- It was identified that there could have been more effective communication between the University Hospital North Tees, the Community Intervention Team and care homes to facilitate a service user's discharge to a new care home that would be better able to support their needs, by ensuring their possessions and equipment were present upon their arrival at the new placement. This case was used as an anonymous example to highlight to care coordinators their responsibilities in this scenario, along with the support available when planning a service user's discharge from an acute hospital, with the aim of improving future practice.
- A social worker was unexpectedly absent from work, so there was no 'out of office' message on their email account, giving the impression that they were ignoring their emails. An apology was given as part of the complaint response along with an assurance that all team managers had been made aware that the IT Helpdesk can add an 'out of office' message to email accounts when staff are unexpectedly off work.
- An invitation to a service user's placement review was issued to the wrong address due to the address being entered into the Council's Social Services Information Database (SSID) incorrectly with the intended recipient reporting a potential data breach. An apology was given, as well confirmation that the incident had already been investigated under the Council's Data Protection Policy: Potential Data Breach Incident Procedure (June 2018). A briefing note was issued to staff to remind them of the importance of checking personal details to ensure they are correct before accurately entering these onto SSID.
- In relation to the service user's financial contribution for adult social care services, the minimum income guarantee (MIG) figure was consistently calculated incorrectly in the Council's financial assessments over the past four year, failing to include their dependent children. An unreserved apology was given for any distress caused by the misinterpretation of Department of Health guidance, a reassessment was conducted and refund offered as well as £250 in recognition of the distress caused. The correct interpretation of Department of Health guidance was brought to the attention of all staff responsible for financial assessments and it was confirmed that the Council intended to review all affected cases (on a rolling basis as part of each individual's annual review).

- 40 Payments were made where failures constituted maladministration and/or injustice as defined by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. These are detailed within the LGSCO section in Part Five of the report. It should be noted that financial redress was only considered (and agreed in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.
- 41 It is recognised that where adult social care services are responsible for service failures that have caused losses and significant emotional distress, there is clearly the duty for this to be acknowledged and further distress to the complainant be avoided. In each of the complaint responses issued, full explanations and where appropriate, apologies were offered.
- 42 Complaints continue to provide invaluable information and learning from which adult social care services can improve. At the conclusion of each complaint investigation, the Strategic Manager with responsibility for the service area being complained about ensures that any proposed action is completed, as well as disseminating any learning across their own area of the service and to a wider audience across AHS where appropriate.

Part Seven - Compliments

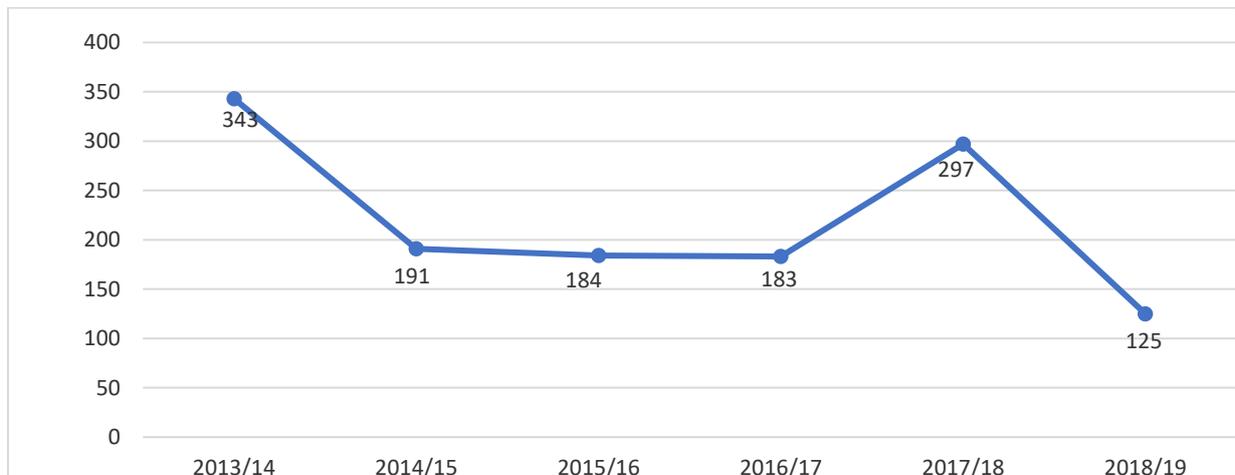
- 43 There is no statutory requirement to publish data on compliments for the period in question; these are included in this report in order to provide a more holistic view of what service users and their nominated representatives think about the services they receive and to understand what elements of the service that are valued.
- 44 There were 125 recorded compliments during 2018/19, a decrease from 297 in 2017/18.
- 45 As shown in the table below, the majority of the compliments in 2017/18 were for County Durham Care and Support (CDCS), the in-house provider services, and some services were outsourced at the end of the previous performance year. As a result, this has had a significant impact upon the total number of compliments, as any positive feedback about this service can no longer be included in these figures

Total number of compliments by service area 2018/19

Service	Total Compliments 2018/19	% of Total Compliments 2018/19	Total Compliments 2017/18	% of Total Compliments 2017/18
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Impairment	66	52.8%	59	19.9%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/ Carers/Substance Misuse	1	0.8%	2	0.7%
County Durham Care and Support	56	44.8%	233	78.4%
Safeguarding, Practice Development & Access	2	1.6%	3	1%
Total	125	100%	297	100%

46 Prior to the significant increase in compliments in the 2017/18 performance year, there has previously been a reduction in the number of compliments received year on year which appeared to have levelled out after a sharp fall in 2014. This decline was considered at the time and it was determined to be associated with changes in the types of provision provided by CDCS.

Year on year trend - adult social care compliments 2013 – 2019



47 It is noted that during 2017/18 the CDCS teams affected by the prospect of outsourcing captured a lot of positive feedback for their area of the service.

48 Compliments for reporting purposes must meet specific criteria. Managers are encouraged to ensure that all compliments in the form of positive comments, letters, emails and cards are captured and shared with their staff and teams to re-inforce their value.

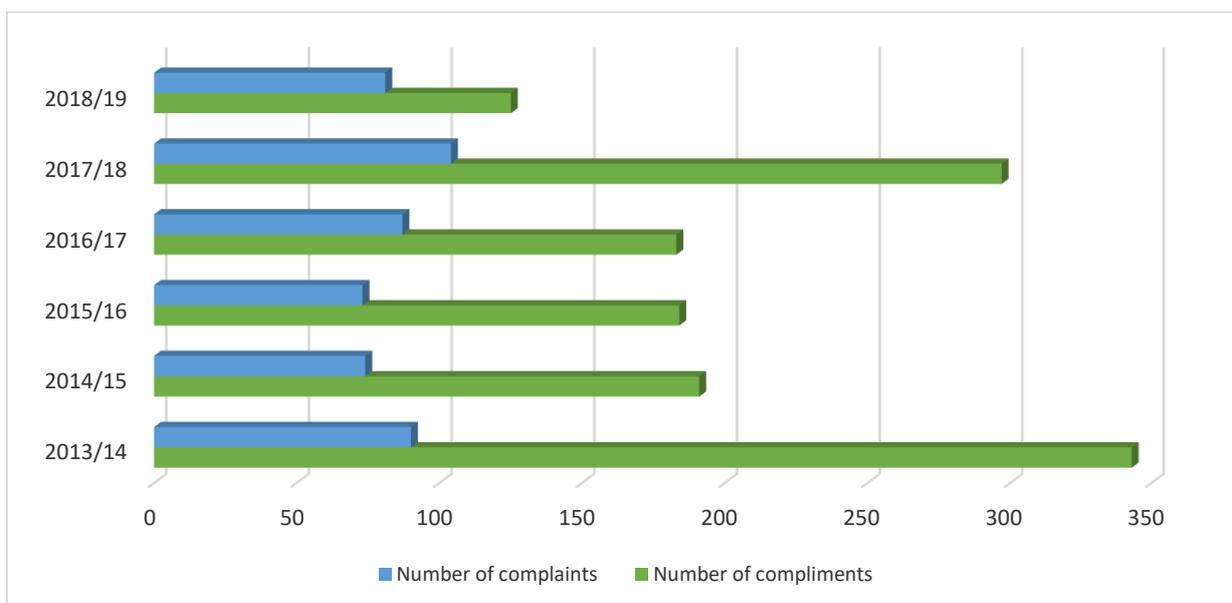
49 Compliments highlight that service users have appreciated the following:

- Feeling respected, listened to and supported.
- Having decisions explained to them.
- Being kept informed.
- Staff explaining issues in a way the client understood.
- Professionalism, care and commitment of staff.
- Being able to contact staff easily.

50 The ratio of compliments to complaints received across AHS is 1.5:1. This means that for every 1 complaint received, there were 1.5 compliments. This represents a decrease on the previous year when the ratio of compliments to complaints was 2.8:1.

51 The number of compliments received consistently outweighs the percentage of complaints received and this is shown in the graph below:

The ratio of compliments to complaints 2013 – 2019



Part Eight – Developments and Conclusion

Developments

52 Whilst the Local Authority has a statutory duty to operate and administer a system for dealing with and reporting upon adult social care complaints, DCC AHS does not simply meet that duty but continuously strives to achieve and maintain a high level of service in relation to the management of complaints. With this aim in mind, a number of developments have been undertaken during 2018/19 to include:

- The continuous improvement of tracking and monitoring systems to ensure actions and learning outcomes arising from complaints are implemented in a timely and effective way and fully embedded. This is also linked to a greater focus by the LGSCO on the monitoring of improvement actions as a consequence of decisions they have made on complaints.
- The active involvement with Azeus to develop a bespoke representations package within the new system for use by AHS, which will replace and update current clerical systems.
- Closer working with the Commissioning service to address an increase in complaints about domiciliary and residential care services which have been commissioned by the Council. This has been undertaken with a view to developing the interface between the complaints function and commissioning to improve the quality of complaints investigations, more effective information gathering and faster response times, with staff in this area of the service undertaking the LGSCO's Effective Complaints Handling course.
- A further focus on a consistency in approach for complainants who are persistent and/or vexatious, linking in with the corporate centre and making better use of the Council's policies and procedures in this area.

Reporting

- 53 Complaints information is reported on a quarterly basis corporately and to AHSMT once at 6 months and then at the year ends, for cascading to managers and staff.

Conclusion

- 54 The complaints function is a statutory requirement for social care services and it plays a vital role in contributing to quality improvement across adult social care as it provides an understanding of the service users' experiences. Acting upon the learning arising from complaints provides the opportunity to change practice and improve service delivery with transparency and accountability.
- 55 A collaborative approach is continually promoted during the management of complaints, where the complainant is central to the process and resolution is proactively sought and encouraged.
- 56 Further information regarding anything in this report is available by contacting:
 Lesley Martin
 AHS Development and Learning Manager
 Durham County Council
 County Hall
 Durham
 DH1 5UJ
 Tel: 03000 267393

Appendix 1 - Glossary of abbreviations

AHS	Adult and Health Services
CDCS	County Durham Care and Support
CDDFT	County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
CRP	Complaints Resolution Plan
DCC	Durham County Council
LGSCO	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
NTHFT	North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
PHSO	Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
TEWV	Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust

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