



## **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date**      **Friday 10 March 2023**

**Time**      **9.30 am**

**Venue**     **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items which are open to the Press and Public  
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement  
and if registered to speak**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 January 2023 (Pages 3 - 10)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any
5. Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
6. Home to School Transport Services - Consultation
  - a) Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, Corporate Director Regeneration Economy and Growth, and Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 11 - 26)
  - b) Presentation by Children and Young People's Services Service Manager (Pages 27 - 40)
7. Early Years - Overview
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 41 - 52)
  - b) Presentation by Lead Officer Early Years and Childcare (Pages 53 - 60)
8. Reducing Parental Conflict in County Durham (Relationships Matter)
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 61 - 74)
  - b) Presentation by the Operations Manager (Pages 75 - 84)

9. Schools Ofsted Update and Educational Attainment
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 85 - 92)
  - b) Presentation by Head of Education and Skills (Pages 93 - 104)
10. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Lynch**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
2 March 2023

To: **The Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor A Reed (Chair)  
Councillor J Cosslett (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bell, R Charlton-Lainé, I Cochrane, M Currah, S Deinali, J Griffiths, O Gunn, C Hunt, L Kennedy, C Lines, C Martin, L Mavin, D Mulholland, K Rooney, A Sterling, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock and M Walton

**Faith Communities Representatives:**  
Mrs L Keenan and Mrs L Vollans

**Parent Governor Representatives:**  
Mr P Debrett-Watson

**Co-opted Members:**  
Ms R Evans and Ms A Gunn

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**Contact: Paula Nicholson      Tel: 03000 269710**

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## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 9 January 2023 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor A Reed (Chair)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Cosslett, S Deinali, J Griffiths, B Kellett, L Mavin, D Mulholland, K Rooney, M Simmons, A Sterling, S Townsend, E Waldock and M Walton

**Co-opted Members:**

Ms R Evans and Mrs A Gunn

#### 1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Bell, I Cochrane, M Currah, O Gunn, C Hunt, C Martin, C Varty and Mrs L Vollans.

#### 2 **Substitute Members**

Councillor B Kellett substituted for Councillor C Varty and Councillor M Simmons substituted for Councillor C Martin.

#### 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

#### 4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties**

There were no items from Co-opted Members or interested parties.

## **6 Relationship Based Social Work Practice**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided an overview of the progress being made within Children's Social Care to embed high quality relationship based social work.

The Strategic Manager Safeguarding and Professional Practice was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that provided the background and key developments; impact and the next steps (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

As the framework has developed its use among teams has increased including use by partners in educational settings and the North East Ambulance Service. Members were advised that the practice framework was having a positive impact on children and families in County Durham and that it was also a thread running through the recent ILACS and was highlighted that social workers use strong relationship based practice to build trusting and enduring relationships with children and their families.

Councillor Walton asked what percentage of staff overall had taken up the staff training.

The Strategic Manager Safeguarding and Professional Practice responded that he would get back to Councillor Walton with the exact figures but indicated that the majority of staff had attended the two-day training course. The five-day training course was now a six-day advance course that was targeted at managers, social consultants and early practitioners.

Mrs Gunn commented that they were achieving real sustainable change that demonstrated they had high investment and were delivering high value.

The Strategic Manager Safeguarding and Professional Practice indicated that the work practice was delivered across the whole system so that the child and family were empowered and experience continuity.

**Resolved:** That the report and presentation be noted.

## **7 Sufficiency Strategy**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which provided information on the purpose of the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care

Leavers, the current delivery position, ongoing challenges and actions that were taking to improve the sufficiency of living arrangements for children and young people in the Council's care.

The Practice Lead Children in Care was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that provided local data and intelligence; key achievements; listening to children and young people; providing stability; out of area living arrangements; unregulated arrangements and key development priorities (for copy of report and presentation, see file of minutes).

Currently there were a large number of children and young people in care, and this was reflected both regionally and nationally. There was a need to increase the number of foster carers to meet the increasing demand.

The number of unaccompanied asylum seekers has increased too adding to the pressure of an already stretched resource and there were increases in the number of children and young people on the edge of care that require support.

The Practice Lead advised that the service was looking for small homes for children and young people and that large homes did not work as well meeting the needs of children. The service regularly meets with local providers at a forum who were motivated to work with the authority, the forum was well attended and there was a waiting list of providers to join the forum.

Members learned that there were a number of children and young people in out of area placements, but the vast majority of those placements were close to the County boundary. However, for some other children it was right for them to be placed far from the county boundary and some of County Durham's children were in places such as Plymouth and Aberdeen. The Practice Lead highlighted that school was a significant factor in a child's life and that education stability was very important and the service ensured that children and young people who live outside of County Durham boundary but where they remained within travelling distance to their school they would travel to their original school. A very small proportion live outside of these arrangements and reported that there were successes in returning children and young people to regional arrangements.

Members were advised that in relation to unregulated arrangements and since the report was written move on plans had now been developed for 4 of the children with further work ongoing for the remaining 3 children.

Councillor Sterling indicated that she liked the idea of small children's homes and asked about staffing for these homes and if they were upskilling existing staff or looking for new specialist staff and if they were on track for the 35 new foster families by March 2023.

The Practice Lead Children in Care responded that they were not on track for new foster families, but they had gone back to foster carers as a group to ask why they were fostering children and what was special about Durham. They did know that foster carers were the best at recruiting other foster carers.

Members were also advised that they were going to re-launch another mockingbird hub which was successful and used this as a mechanism to recruit more foster carers.

The Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that the service had a range of ideas, but foster carers needed to tell them what works. She then referred to staffing in children's homes and advised that it would be a mixture of experienced staff and recruitment of new staff, they were working on a training offer for staff in children's homes so that staff have an enhanced level of awareness and are able to respond to trauma. Work had also taken place with Full Circle, to ensure that children and young people had a new plan when they go into a children's home.

Councillor Walton asked how close they were on the recruitment of foster carers.

The Practice Lead Children in Care responded that it was a difficult position, they had recruited new foster carers but then some established foster carers had left. The age profile of foster carers was largely those people of middle age onwards and as the foster carers get older, they leave which leaves a net situation of no progress and the service would need to strike a balance, so they needed to constantly recruit.

Councillor Walton then asked for further information on an unregulated setting and how they were balancing keeping children in a stable setting as this was another move for a child.

The Practice Lead Children in Care responded that each decision was based on a child-by-child basis and was taken by the Director of Children's Social Care. In some cases, a child would be placed in an unregulated setting overnight only. The children and young people are presented to other home providers, every child is presented differently and if a placement is not successful the child would bounce out which would be harmful to the child.

There were cases where it was an overnight stay and the child would go back to their substantive home, a child would only move if it was the right place for them.

In response to a further question from Councillor Walton, the Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that unregulated settings were as safe as they were able to make them, and they had a number of mechanisms for assuring safety for children in any such setting.

Mrs Gunn asked if 'sufficiency strategy' was the right term to be used.

The Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that they could ask young people their thoughts, but the term was part of the regulations and the Children Act 1989 that requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children looked after.

Mrs Gunn then referred to the capital spending and asked if consideration had been given to the impact on climate change. The Practice Lead Children in Care confirmed that climate change had been considered.

Mrs Gunn referred to universal short breaks mentioned in the report and asked if consideration had been given to private users outside of children's social care been able to access the facilities such as children with disabilities. The Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that the project was at the early stages so there was no reason why this could not be considered.

In response to a further question from Mrs Gunn, the Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that they had appointed a psychologist so had not faced any problems in recruitment of psychologists they also had access to the Full Circle service. This field of psychology was niche and not the same as educational psychologists.

Mrs Evans thanked the Practice Lead for addressing climate change and giving real examples of how climate change is addressed and commented that she would like to see the details of the impact on climate change contained within more reports.

Councillor Deinali referred to the recruitment of foster carers who were unable to proceed due to lack of bedroom space and unable to move to a bigger property unless they had foster children and asked if there was the ability for foster carers to move to larger properties.

The Practice Lead Children in Care indicated that they worked with housing providers and foster carers to overcome this issue and would continue to do so.

**Resolved:** That the report and presentation be noted.

## **8 Revenue and Capital Forecast 2022/23 Q2**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Children and Young People's Services, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position at the end of September 2022 (for copy, see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) was in attendance to present the report and highlighted the major variances and advised

Members that since writing the report there was additional funding for schools next year.

He emphasised that pressures from the rise in the number of children looked after with complex needs, 981 in quarter one rising to 1028 in quarter two were impacting on the budget.

The Finance Manager CYPS added that schools were in a better position having taken decisions between quarters one and two and had managed reductions in energy contracts, but that significant work would need to be done assuming pay awards stay, and the service was working with schools to set budgets for the next financial year. The additional government funding for schools will not impact on until the next financial year.

In relation to the centrally retained block more special school places were being taken up which was costing more and was impacting on the high needs block which was a deficit balance. The Finance Manager CYPS emphasised that this was a problem nationally and the high needs block deficit at Durham County Council was at the lower end of local authority high needs block deficit balances with others having much higher deficits than Durham County Council. He went on to advise that Durham County Council was part of the Delivering Better Value programme, and it would lead to more efficiencies and would come in later this year.

In response to a question from Councillor Townsend on the pay award for teachers and support staff and the impact on the budget the Children and Young People's Finance Manager indicated that the pay award was for the current financial year and the additional funding from government was for the next financial year.

Mrs Gunn asked for an update on the home to school transport analysis and how much of the higher needs block was to do with third party providers.

The Finance Manager CYPS indicated that a report on the home to school transport would be presented to a future scrutiny committee. He would circulate a response to the committee on third party providers but indicated that it was relatively small.

The Head of Education and Skills advised Members that a small team had been recruited to look at home to school transport and expected a report April 2023.

In response to a question from Councillor Mavin the Children and Young People's Finance Manager indicated that there were some special schools with a deficit budget.

**Resolved:** That the overall revenue position be noted.



## 9 Performance Management 2022/23 Q2

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the Council's corporate performance framework and highlighted key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes. The report covered performance in and to the end of quarter two, July to September 2022 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Equalities and Strategic Manager was in attendance to present the key points of the report.

Mrs Evans referred to the revised structure of the report and commented that it was much easier to follow but the figures were not helpful to scrutinise. She indicated that she had previously given examples of items that would be helpful such as the number of library memberships for children and young people and the number of young children who could swim.

The Corporate Equalities and Strategic Manager advised Members that he would feed Mrs Evans comments back to the team who develops the report and provided details of how the report and indicators were developed which was around the Council Plan.

Mrs Gunn agreed with Mrs Evans and commented that they required more performance indicators to enable them to better understand the key performance indicators and where they could feed into where priorities should be.

**Resolved:** That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter two performance, the continuing impact of COVID-19 and the increased cost of living on the Council's performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance including the significant economic and well-being challenges because of the pandemic be noted.

## 10 CAMHS Waiting Time Data - For Information

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust provided a report of CAMHS waiting times for Member's information.

Members were advised to forward any questions they may have to the Scrutiny Officer who would liaise with CAMHS for a response.

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**Children and Young People's Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee**

**10 March 2023**

**Home to School Transport Services -  
Consultation**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's  
Services**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and  
Growth**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide an opportunity for CYPS Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide views as part of the public consultation on proposals to transform Durham County Council's Home to School Transport Service for Children and Young People.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide home to school transport to children and young people who meet circumstances prescribed in legislation. This is set out in statutory guidance from the Department for Education.
- 3 The Home to School Transport offer for our eligible children and young people is currently set out in the Durham County Council "Home to Primary, Secondary and Special School and College Travel and Transport Policy", which mirrors the statutory guidance and also allows for additional discretionary arrangements, which most other local authorities no longer offer.
- 4 The existing Home to School Transport service provides daily transport for over 9,000 children and young people, with over 1,000 contracts in place with Transport Providers.

- 5 At the end of September 2022, projected net expenditure on Home to School Transport is approx. £24.3 million, against a current net budget of £19.5 million. This represents an overspend of £4.8 million.
- 6 It is estimated that net expenditure on Home to School Transport will increase by a further £4.8 million in 2023/24. This estimated increase reflects both the full year impact of price increases experienced in 2022/23 and an estimate of further demand and price pressures in 2023/24.
- 7 The Home to School Transport Budget has been increased by £9.6 million in 2023/24 to cover the additional estimated demand and cost pressures.
- 8 With increasing pressure on funding and growing demand for council services, especially statutory services, decisions need to be made about how the council meets this demand in an affordable yet effective way in the future.
- 9 An external review of the County Council's Home to School Transport Service was undertaken in 2021, in order to identify opportunities to transform the service and to manage demand and pressures on the service.
- 10 The review identified positive opportunities for the Council to develop a strategic programme of work with the aim of:
  - promoting the independence of young people through a range of travel options;
  - addressing inequities in the offer;
  - removing legacy issues to move more in line with other Local Authorities and
  - ensuring value for money for council taxpayers.
- 11 The above includes the opportunity to transform the travel offer for children with Special Educational Needs, which has seen a substantial growth over recent years from 460 transport contracts in 2019 to 594 contracts at September 2022 (29% increase) and which is linked to a significant growth over the same period in the number of young people with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- 12 The findings of the review have also been compounded over the last 12 months due to the significant impact of covid-19 and other world events on transport providers especially in the recruitment and retention of

drivers and increasing operating costs arising from inflation and energy prices.

- 13 The Service review identified a number of opportunities in relation to transforming the Home to School Transport Service, which are:
- Review the provision of the Durham County Council's Concessionary Schemes;
  - Consider how the Council can more effectively and efficiently support the provision of journeys and passenger assistants on transport;
  - Promote Independence skills of young people through travel training and other opportunities;
  - Introduce a simplified process for providing personal travel budgets for parents/cares of pupils with SEND and those living in remote rural areas where it is cost effective to do so;
  - Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County, especially schools with high volumes of routes and
  - Review potential procurement options for home to school transport services in relation to impact on value for money and associated competitive pricing.
- 14 This paper sets out the detail of the transformation priorities. The consultation is taking place between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 15 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:
- Consider the contents of this report and make any observations or comments about the detail within this report and to share any thoughts, ideas or suggestions about the proposals.

## Background

- 16 The Council has a statutory duty under various Acts and Guidance to provide education transport to eligible students. The main legislation is set out in the following:
- The Education Act 1996;
  - Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006;
  - The Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014;
  - Post 16 Transport to Education and Training Guidance 2014.
- 17 In order to comply with statutory Home to School Transport duties local authorities must comply with the following :
- Promote the use of sustainable travel and transport;
  - Make transport arrangements for all eligible children.
- 18 In particular, the Education Act 1996, states that a statutory duty is placed on the Council to make suitable travel arrangements to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children of compulsory school age (5-16). This is based on statutory walking distance for children to a qualifying school as follows:
- Beyond 2 miles (below the age of 8);
  - Beyond 3 miles (age 8 – 16);
  - Between 2 – 6 miles for pupils from low income families (for example in receipt of free school meals);
  - No statutory distances for pupils with a disability or mobility requirement.
- 19 The Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014 (Special Education Needs) requires Local Authorities to make transport arrangements for those children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility or associated health and safety issues related to their special education needs and disabilities.
- 20 Durham County Council's Home to School Transport service provides daily transport to over 9,000 passengers, made up of mainstream and SEND passengers along with other special provision. This is delivered by over 1,000 contracts and utilising over 300 different transport suppliers.

- 21 Expenditure on home to school transport has been increasing steadily over recent years. At the end of September 2022, projected net expenditure for the 2022/23 financial year on statutory Home to School Transport is approx. £24.3 million, against a current net budget of £19.5 million. An overspend of £4.8 million for the period. This increase is due to demographic growth, inflationary pressures and prices.
- 22 The increasing demand and cost of Home to School Transport has been driven by a number of factors:
- SEND Transport delivery, including the increased demand for Taxis and Passenger Assistants over recent years. An external review undertaken in 2021 identified that whilst 23% of pupil demand (2,013 passengers) is for SEND/other specialist transport this represents 72.8% of the total expenditure on the service (£16.172 million).
  - National Regulations, such as Public Sector Vehicles Accessibility Regulations, which have required vehicles to meet additional specification requirements.
  - Increasing contractor costs, driven by fuel prices, inflation and wage increases.
  - Parental/School expectations, including meeting the needs of a significantly increased number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans.
- 23 Transport costs are forecasted to rise further in future years with continuing price inflation and increases in the National Minimum Wage likely to impact the service.
- 24 Further pressures on the Home to School Transport market have arisen due to the recent pandemic and other world events including:
- transport companies reporting increased difficulties recruiting and retaining driving staff post covid-19.
  - The growth of on-line shopping leading to greater demand for drivers for the home delivery sector.
  - Increased operating costs for travel companies due to increased energy prices and inflation.
- 25 It is estimated that net expenditure on Home to School Transport will increase by a further £4.8 million in 2023/24. This estimated increase reflects both the full year impact of price increases experienced in

2022/23 and an estimate of further demand and price pressures in 2023/24.

- 26 The Home to School Transport Budget has been increased by £1.3 million in 23/24 to reflect the standard 5% price increase assumption used by the County Council. In addition, the budget has also been increased by a further £8.3 million to cover the additional estimated demand and cost pressures in 2023/24.
- 27 To help understand the issues in more detail and be informed by best practice elsewhere in the country, the Council commissioned a review of the Home to School Transport service in 2021. The review considered home to school transport organisation and delivery, key policy and processes, supply market value, procurement, routing, systems and performance.
- 28 The culmination of the review was a range of key findings and potential improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service, which were presented to the Council for consideration.
- 29 The Council has also identified a number of guiding principles for the Service Transformation of Home to School Transport in that proposals should be:
- Sustainable and support the Council's Environmental policies
  - Safe for providers and users of the Service
  - Aligned to the identified needs of Children and Young People
  - Supportive of the Independence of Children and Young People where appropriate
  - Efficient and deliver value for money.
- 30 The Council has therefore shaped a transformation programme for its Home to School Transport Services around the following Priorities, are the subject matter of the consultation as follows:

### **Priority 1 - Review the DCC Concessionary Scheme.**

- 31 Concessionary seats are spare seats available on a school bus, that are sold to pupils who are **not** entitled to free transport. There are three schemes which operate in County Durham:
- ***The standard scheme.*** When the Council is commissioning transport for statutorily entitled pupils there are likely to be spare seats available which are made available to non-entitled pupils.



This practice is common across Local Authorities in England. The current charge is £1.63 per day;

- **The maintained scheme.** This was implemented following policy changes that took effect in September 2012, where sufficient transport capacity was maintained within the Spare Seats Concessions on established school transport routes that did not have an alternative suitable local bus service. The Council does not operate a full cost recovery model for this scheme and incurs a financial loss each year of over £250,000. The current charge is £1.63 per day. A comparable commercial child fare is Go North East 'Under 19' fare which is currently available at £1.40 single fare ticket, which would result in a charge of £2.80 for a return journey. Most Local Authorities do not offer this discretionary type of concessionary scheme as part of their Home to School Travel offer.
- **The Schools' Scheme.** Concessionary transport is provided where partner schools request the Council to arrange a scheme. There are currently 11 schools participating covering travel by 2,110 children. Schools are able to set their own charges for the provision. This scheme is cost neutral to the Council as it is fully funded by the participating schools and is not part of the consultation.

32 The consultation will seek views on:

- A proposed increase to the daily charge for the provision of the standard and maintained Concessionary schemes which aligns to the Go North East Under 19 fare of £2.80 for a return journey from 2023/24 academic year.
- The future provision of the maintained Concessionary scheme, in particular the cessation of the scheme and options for implementation.

## **Priority 2 - Consider how the Council can more effectively and efficiently support the provision of journeys and passenger assistants on transport.**

33 Single person journeys and passenger assistants are mainly provided for children with special educational needs and disabilities and mainly to pupils in special schools. They are usually taxis which is the most expensive form of transport. Furthermore, the transported pupil is often accompanied by a Passenger Assistant.

- 34 The number of contracts for transporting young people with Special Educational Needs to schools and post 16 settings has seen a substantial growth over recent years from 460 transport contracts in 2019 to 594 contracts in September 2022 (29% increase).
- 35 Over this time period, there has also been a significant increase in the number of children and young people with SEND receiving single person transport to schools and post 16 settings from 177 in February 2019 to 238 as at January 2023.
- 36 This increase in demand has corresponded to a significant rise in children with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan with numbers increasing from 2,994 at the start of 2019 to 4,143 in November 2022 (38% increase).
- 37 The 2021 Review of Home to School Transport identified that:
- 41% (204) of SEND Transport Routes in County Durham were single person journeys compared to the benchmark of selected similar County Councils of 38%;
  - 93% (467) of SEND Transport Routes in County Durham had a passenger assistant, with the benchmark for selected similar County Councils being 64%;
  - Durham had a lower number of passengers per SEN Transport Route at 2.94 passengers per route. The benchmark for selected similar County Councils was 3.37 passengers.
- 38 The consultation will:
- Explore how best to ensure the optimum use of home to school transport resources, in particular the provision of single person vehicles and passenger assistants whilst discharging statutory responsibilities;
  - Seek views on the potential impact on the duration of transport journeys and the benefits of independence/ socialisation with peers.

### **Priority 3 - Develop independence skills of young people and Introduce an updated personal travel budget scheme.**

- 39 Independent Travel Training (ITT) is a process that trains individuals on how to travel independently in a safe and responsible way. Travelling independently is a life skill that reduces isolation and dependency and opens opportunities for education, employment and enjoyment.

- 40 Many children with SEND currently receive door-to-door transport from the time they start school until the time they leave college and as such they do not gain the necessary travel and social skills that other children do. Whilst some children with SEND will not be able to travel independently, those that are able, should be given the opportunity to do so.
- 41 This presents an opportunity to develop travel training, which will involve tuition in timetable reading and practical coaching in catching buses and route familiarisation. The scheme can be extremely successful and in some authorities over 50 children every year are helped to travel independently. The scheme has the potential to produce better outcomes for children over the long term and will have benefits for their future mobility, social integration, and employability.
- 42 The Council is also considering options in respect of the introduction of Pickup Points. Pickup points are similar to bus stops, where the Council identifies designated pick-up and drop-off locations for the pupil to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils and supports children and young people to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.
- 43 It will require pupils to walk a reasonable distance in order to access public transport close to where they live. The maximum distances will depend on a range of circumstances, including the age of the child, their individual needs and the nature of the routes they are expected to walk to the designated pickup or set down points.
- 44 In taking forward any plans to introduce Pickup Points the council will take factors such as safety and ease of access into account, as well as learning from examples where this has been successfully introduced.
- 45 A Personal Travel Budget is a sum of money provided by the Council to parents or carers of children with SEND who are eligible for travel assistance. The budget allows families to make their own arrangements for travel, thereby increasing choice and flexibility. It also provides an opportunity for the Council to reduce expenditure and management time associated with day-to-day arrangements. The External Review indicated that annual savings per pupil of approx. £6,000 are possible through the use of Personal Travel budgets.
- 46 In many local authorities, Personal Travel Budgets are typically offered to SEN passengers as they mainly represent those in receipt of special door to door transport arrangements. However, in Durham there is an increased opportunity to offer PTBs given the higher number of

mainstream passengers travelling by specially arranged contracted transport because of geography/ rurality.

- 47 The Council has only issued 10 Personal Budgets, which is 0.2% of those transport passengers. Other councils in the benchmark group achieve around 2.24% of all passengers. This is partly due to the current scheme only allowing parents to procure transport provision from transport contractors.
- 48 Both personal travel budgets and independent travel training are underdeveloped and not part of any strategic plan for the service.
- 49 The consultation will seek views on:
- The introduction of an independent travel training scheme to support independence and socialisation of young people;
  - The benefits of Personal Travel Budgets and how a simplified scheme can provide greater flexibility and incentive to parents to transport their own children to school and
  - The benefits and impact of the introduction of pickup points.

#### ***Priority 4 - Review Unsafe Walking Routes and Re-Routing***

- 50 The Council provides free transport for pupils travelling to their nearest suitable school, who would not otherwise qualify due to being under the relevant distance threshold, where the shortest walking route(s) are assessed as unsuitable to walk. A suitable route is one on which a pupil, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school. Assessing the suitability of routes takes into account the following:
- Traffic flow on the road and at crossing points;
  - Accident record of the route;
  - Visibility and sight lines;
  - Presence or absence of 'step-off' footway alongside the road;
  - Street lighting on route. The absence of street-lighting is not in itself sufficient to declare a route unsafe. DCC interprets this as requiring street lighting to be present at crossing points.
- 51 In July 2022, there were 491 pupils receiving free transport as a result of their walking route being assessed as unsuitable. There is the potential to make some of these unsuitable routes safe through highways works, with associated costs, enabling children to safely walk

to school, as well as providing wider benefits to the community such as helping to improve fitness and potentially contributing to reduced child obesity. Individual proposals for schemes to make unsuitable routes safe will be developed and consulted upon separately.

- 52 The Review of Home to School Transport identified opportunities for effectiveness and efficiency through an annual re-routing exercise. It is common practice amongst councils to evaluate opportunities for re-routing journeys to reflect changes in demand and other changes in the lead up to the new school year. The Council has implemented new IT software to support an exercise of this type.
- 53 Whilst this may require some changes to existing routes patterns, the review identified a potential efficiency of around 11% as the minimum that can be expected from schools with 5 routes or more. This would also have potential to release vehicles from existing routes, which would then be available to transport pupils as well as improving competition on tendering and reduce vehicles on the roads at peak times.
- 54 The consultation will seek views on:
- The introduction of improvements to existing unsuitable routes to make them safe for children to attend school without the need for Home to School Transport; and
  - The benefits of undertaking a comprehensive route review to deliver efficiencies and improvements in the provision of transport routes.

***Priority 5 - Review potential procurement options for home to school transport services in relation to impact on value for money and associated competitive pricing.***

- 55 As highlighted earlier in the report, the Home to School Transport Service is currently operating in an environment of increasing price inflation and contract costs with challenges around transport supply and market competition in some areas.
- 56 It is therefore pivotal to the delivery of the Service that the Council has a clear strategy and approach in relation to the procurement and supply of transport moving forward.
- 57 This will involve assessing opportunities to develop the supply base further and increase competition and deliver better value on routes and contracts.
- 58 The programme will benchmark current ways of working and identify potential alternative options for how the Council procures its home to

school transport services and associated competitive pricing to best meet travel needs.

- 59 The consultation will seek views on how the Council can best achieve value for money, whilst maintaining quality of service.

### **National Research by the County Councils Network**

- 60 The findings from the Durham review have also been reflected in national feedback from the County Councils Network, who surveyed councils in 2021 to understand the impact on Home to School Transport demand and costs. The County Councils Network (CCN) published a review in March 2022 with main findings as follows:

- Costs of delivering services have increased over the last 5 years, due to economic factors such as inflation and wage rises, but also an increasing number of young people with complex needs requiring specialist transport;
- Expenditure on mainstream home to school transport has remained flat over the five years as councils have cut back to statutory minimum and fewer pupils are transported free;
- Councils have told CCN that transport providers are retendering for contracts early, and at prices up to 20% higher than last year;
- SEND home to school transport is arguably most affected by fuel price rises. Due to their specific needs, many of these pupils require taxis, private hire vehicles, or minibuses;
- The yearly average per head expenditure on SEND home to school transport pupils increased by £206 between 2018/19 to 2020/21;
- Due to statutory duties, LAs are paying significantly higher rates rather than risk a provider pulling out of routes altogether.
- In a separate CCN survey in relation to home to school transport for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, over half of Councils responding (14) said it was 'unsustainable'.

### **Consultation Timeline**

- 61 The consultation is taking place between 27 February 2023 and 12 April 2023 with a report to Cabinet in Summer 2023 with the outcome of the consultation.
- 62 The consultation is designed to be as inclusive as possible, engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including listening to the views of young

people. The impacts on groups of people with protected characteristics will continue to be reviewed as the project and proposals progress and the council will work with partners to identify and evaluate any mitigations to address adverse impacts.

## **Conclusion**

- 63 The Home to School Transport Service is a statutory service which is highly valued by parents, children and young people who use the Service. However, it also represents a challenge to the Council in terms of effective management and control of costs.
- 64 Overall transport costs have been increasing for many years and are forecasted to rise further in future years. This is largely explained by increases in SEND and special transport demand, increasing contractor prices and increasing expectations.
- 65 The External Review undertaken in 2021 has identified potential opportunities to transform the services offered and to achieve sustainable, year on year cost efficiencies.
- 66 The consultation provides an opportunity to seek feedback from stakeholders in relation to the Council's proposals for a future Service.

## **Author**

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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### Legal Implications

The Education Act 1996 and Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 sets out the statutory duty on Local Authorities to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children.

The EIA 2006 defines eligible children as follows:

#### *Statutory walking distances eligibility*

The Local Authority must provide free transport for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) if their nearest suitable school is:

- Beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or
- Beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

#### *Special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility*

The Local Authority must make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability. Eligibility for such children should be assessed on an individual basis to identify their particular transport requirements. Usual transport requirements (e.g. the statutory walking distances) should not be considered when assessing the transport needs of children eligible due to SEN and / or disability.

#### *Unsafe route eligibility*

The Local Authority must make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is assessed as unsafe to walk.

#### *Extended rights eligibility*

The Local Authority is required to provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum level of Working Tax Credit if:

- The nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children aged 8 but under 11)
- One of their three nearest suitable schools, if that school is between 2 and 6 miles (for children aged 11 -16)
- The nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, for pupils whose parents adhere to that particular faith, where that school is between 2 and 15 miles (for children aged 11 – 16)



## **Finance**

The Consultation includes proposals to increase the charge for the concessionary scheme to a commercial rate of £2.80 per day from the current daily rate of £1.63.

## **Consultation**

The Consultation plan is included in the main report.

## **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

A full Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at appendix 2 detailing potential impacts (both positive and negative) in relation to the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex (women). The assessment will be updated throughout and following the consultation to assess the impact of the proposed changes on the protected characteristic groups and to identify and evaluate any mitigations.

## **Climate Change**

A Sustainability Assessment has been undertaken for the Home to School Transport Review and reported to CMT previously. This includes a specific response in relation to impact on Climate Change.

A Climate Change Impact Assessment has also been developed in respect of the Review of the Concessionary Scheme and Review of Unsafe Walking routes which concluded that proposals to change existing arrangements for the provision of home to school transport have the potential to impact on climate change through reducing transport routes and therefore carbon emissions. The consultation must be careful to consider any potential increase in the use of personal vehicles.

## **Human Rights**

None.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None.

## **Staffing**

None.

## **Accommodation**

None.

## **Risk**

There is a risk of challenge if the consultation and equalities impact are not undertaken in accordance with legislative requirements.

## **Procurement**

The consultation will seek views on how the Council can best procure home to school transport services which have an impact on value for money and maintain quality of service.

# Durham County Council Home to School Transport - Consultation

Children and Young People's Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee

10<sup>th</sup> March 2023



# Purpose

- Outline background to the Consultation
- Set out the Proposals for Consultation
- Set out Consultation Timeframe
- Questions

# Eligibility & Number of Users

- Council has statutory duty to provide transport to eligible children
- Eligibility is summarised as follows:
  - Have special educational needs/disabilities/mobility issues
  - Live a set distance from their nearest appropriate school
- The Council also provides discretionary transport to approx. 570 children which are not part of the statutory duty.
- Over 9,000 children use Home to School Transport Services
- Over 1,000 contracts in place with over 300 transport providers

# Financial Pressures

- Approx. 50% contracts renewed for Sept 2022
- 33% as standard and remainder due to contractual issues or provider failure.
- 22/23 net budget is £19.5m. Net expenditure projection is £24.3m.
- Net Budget provision for 23/24 is approx. £29.2m
- Increase in Expenditure driven by:
  - ✓ contract inflation for new contracts
  - ✓ increase in demand

# National Context

- In a **CCN survey** of County Councils, it was evident that:
  - ✓ transport providers are retendering for contracts at around 20% higher.
  - ✓ Smaller firms are most impacted by rising fuel prices and workforce challenges. This is likely to impact on SEND school transport the most.
  - ✓ LA's are paying significantly higher rates rather than risk a provider pulling out of routes altogether.
  - ✓ Only one council out of 23 respondents said expenditure on SEND home to school transport was 'manageable'. Over half (14) said it was 'unsustainable'.
  - ✓ a direct correlation between the number of pupils in receipt of EHCPs and the increase in travellers on SEND home to school transport.

# Home to School Transport External Review 2021

- H2ST transformation programme set up in April 2021.
- External review of the Service commissioned in June 2021 and summarised opportunities as follows:
  - Better controlling and developing the supply market and managing a complex re-engagement, re-procurement, and routing overhaul exercise.
  - Resetting the culture of parental & school expectation to a service offering travel solutions (incl. personal budgets, promotion of independence) rather than a door-to-door service.
  - Improved strategic and tactical integration across the organisation.
  - Consideration of options to offer concessionary travel in a more effective way.



# Priority 1

## Review the DCC Concessionary Schemes

- **Description** - Concessionary Seats scheme is provided to pupils who are not entitled to free transport under the Council's statutory duty.
- There are 2 Concessionary schemes (School Scheme is out of scope):
  - 'Spare Seat' programme - 61 Children use this scheme. Daily charge is £1.63
  - Maintained Capacity – approx. 500 pupils on scheme (11 schools). Cost to the council in excess of £250,000 per annum. Daily Charge is £1.63.

## Proposals

- To increase the charge for the Spare Seat and Maintained Capacity schemes to £2.80 per day for return journey to align to market rate for Under 19 fare.
- Consult on phasing out of the Maintained Scheme & options for implementation.

# Priority 2

## Consider how we can more effectively and efficiently support the provision of single person journeys and passenger assistants

- **Description** - Single person journeys and passenger assistants are mainly provided for pupils in special schools. They are often taxi's, which is the most expensive form of transport.
- There are currently 376 single person journeys, which has increased from 286 in 2019.
- 93% of our SEND Routes have a PA, which is higher than other similar Councils at 64%.
- Significant increases in the cost and numbers of young people receiving single person transport with/without a passenger assistant.

### Proposals

- Consider the most cost effective & efficient way of providing transport services. This may involve considering alternative travel options to single person transport and passenger assistants for some children.

# Priority 3

## Develop independence skills of young people.

- **Description** – There are currently limited options in Durham to enable appropriate young people with SEND to travel independently.
- The existing Personal Travel Budget scheme is not encouraging parents to consider transporting their own children.

### Proposals

- Develop Independent Travel Training Scheme for older young people
- Consider the introduction of Pickup points.
- Streamline the Personal Travel Budget scheme to provide a more appropriate offer to parents of children with SEND and some parents in rural areas

# Priority 4

## Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the county

- **Description** – A child qualifies for free transport to their nearest suitable school where the shortest walking route(s) are assessed as unsuitable to walk safely. Around 500 children receive free transport for this reason.
- The 2021 Review also identified that the Council operates a high number of transport routes and these could be reduced.

### Proposals

- Review travel routes so that we are able to provide the most cost effective and environmentally friendly journeys to transport children to school
- Identify any routes currently unsafe and assess whether they can be made safe with capital improvements.

# Priority 5

## Procurement Approach

- **Description** - home to school transport services operate in a challenging environment of increasing demand, price inflation and contract costs. There are also challenges around the supply of transport and market competition in some geographical areas.

### Proposals

- Review how we commission services to ensure they are sustainable for the future as well as delivering value for money on routes and contracts

# Consultation

- The statutory guidance requires Local Authorities to consult on changes to their policy.
- A Consultation process started on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and will run until 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023.
- The responses provided during the consultation will be analysed and the outcomes of the consultation presented to Cabinet in Summer 2023.
- Local authorities have statutory duty to provide transport when national eligibility criteria are met. Children eligible under the Councils statutory duty will continue to receive free transport.
- [www.durham.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.durham.gov.uk/consultation)

# Questions

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**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**10 March 2023**



**Early Years - Overview**

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**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director Children and Young  
People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an introduction to a presentation on Early Years Services in County Durham

**Executive summary**

- 2 Following Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreeing its work programme, arrangements were made for members to receive an overview of the Early Years' Service.
- 3 The importance of a child's earliest years is widely recognised. Their brain develops connections faster in the first five years than at any other time in their lives and the experiences and relationships a child has, plus nutrition and health, can either support learning or have a negative impact. High quality early years provision has an essential role in improving the life chances of young children in County Durham. The Government requires local authorities to ensure that sufficient educational provision provides high quality support for children and families. Durham County Council's Early Years' service supports the authority in its duty to ensure that sufficient, accessible and high-quality childcare is available to support better outcomes for children.
- 4 All Early Years providers must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which is a statutory framework that sets the standards of provision for early years providers. Both schools and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers are inspected against the EYFS by Ofsted and awarded an early year's judgement.

- 5 All early years' providers must continually review the child's developmental progress, however when the child is aged two years, complete a written report, summing up progress: celebrating where the child is making good progress and identifying any areas of concern, or where progress is not as expected, so that appropriate support and interventions can be put in place swiftly. Another formal assessment is when the child is in the last term of reception class. The EYFS profile is completed and is a statutory data collection. Each child's records are combined at local authority and national level to produce a National Statistics publication. The DfE uses EYFS profile data to monitor changes in levels of children's learning and development both nationally and regionally and to compare the development outcomes of different groups of children.
  
- 6 The Early Years' Service recognise that the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic may have impacted on what children have learned. This could result in some children having a wider than usual range of starting points and gaps in their knowledge. Children who were born into lockdowns, or experienced several lockdowns in their first 24 months, didn't have anything close to an ordinary first 1,000 days. The service is working in partnership with other services across the council to ensure that the early years workforce is supported with professional development and equipped to deliver high quality teaching to address any impact of the pandemic on the youngest children, with a focus on the most disadvantaged areas.

## **Recommendations**

- 7 That Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report and presentation, and comment accordingly.

## **Background**

- 8 At its meeting on 7 July 2022, members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme for the ensuing year.
  
- 9 Included in the committee's work programme was an item to give an overview of the Early Years' Service in County Durham, and, in accordance with that decision, arrangements were made for the Lead Early Years and Childcare Officer to attend the committee and provide members with that information.

- 10 A presentation accompanying this report will cover the following:
- LA - Sufficiency Duties
  - Map - Early Years Provision in the County
  - Covid Recovery
    - Some challenges we face
    - Support and Interventions
    - National Response – Enquiry

## **Early Years Context**

- 11 It is widely recognised that the quality of a child’s early experiences, including the childcare they access, can not only improve physical, emotional, social and educational outcomes in their early years, but lays down solid foundations for success throughout childhood and into adulthood. High quality early years provision has a pivotal role in improving the life chances for the youngest children in Durham.
- 12 Central Government recognises the importance of early years, charging councils to deliver statutory duties to ensure that educational provision provides high quality support for children and families. The Early Years’ Service supports the council in its duty to ensure that sufficient, accessible and high-quality childcare is available to support better outcomes for children and to enable parents/carers to work or train.
- 13 ‘Growing up in County Durham’ cites the importance of making sure that all children are supported to be happy, healthy and safe to achieve their full potential; ensuring the availability of suitable high quality childcare places across our diverse county will enable parent/carers to access employment and is integral to the council’s ambition to ensure that children have the best start in life and eliminate the effects of deprivation and poverty as determined in the County Durham Vision 2035.

## **The Early Years Sector**

- 14 The structure of the early years sector is multifaceted, with different contexts, infrastructures and professional routes. Provision in the authority reflects this scope; the 481 Early Years providers are made up of:- 138 nursery units in Infant and Primary Schools (Academy and Maintained), 11 stand-alone Local Authority Maintained Nursery Schools and 4 Local Authority Childcare nurseries, 115 Ofsted registered childcare nurseries and out of school provision, and 213 Childminders working in their own homes.

- 15 Schools sit within the governance of DfE, but any other provider caring for children under eight years old, for more than two hours per day, must be registered and regulated with Ofsted as a Private, Voluntary and Independent childcare provider (referred to as the PVI sector).
- 16 Although the composition of the sector is heterogenous, all early years' providers must follow the statutory framework, The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for the development, learning and care of children from birth to age 5. The EYFS framework sets the standards that all early years' providers, including schools with early years provision, must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.
- 17 Early Years provision, including reception classes in schools, is inspected as part of the whole school inspection framework; there is a separate judgement for the EYFS provision. PVI providers are inspected under the Early Years Inspection for Ofsted Registered Provision framework.
- 18 Both PVI and Schools are awarded an early years' judgement and have four possible outcomes: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' and 'Inadequate'. They sit within an inspection cycle of approximately every 4 years unless the awarded grade is less than Good across the whole provision.

### **Government Funded Early Education Places**

- 19 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient early learning places for eligible 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds. The government funded early education entitlements for eligible 2-year-olds and the 15-hour universal offer at 3 and 4 is seen as a key tool in reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. So the service partnership, with colleagues from Health and Children's Services, encourage take up of places by disadvantaged children who stand to benefit the most.
- 20 As at spring term 2023, 1530 eligible children are currently accessing the 2-year offer. The LA take up of places is 89% against an English average of 75%.

- 21 As at spring term 2023, 6745 children are currently accessing the 15-hour Universal offer. The LA take up of places is 94% against an England average of 92%.
- 22 The 30-hour offer for working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds, otherwise known as the Extended Entitlement, was introduced in 2017 and is seen as a key vehicle to support employment and the economy. As at spring term 2023, 3950 children are currently accessing this entitlement.
- 23 There is no national measure for the 30-hour entitlement.

## **Early Years National Funding Formulae – challenges**

- 24 All Schools and PVI providers are permitted to offer the government's funded early years education entitlement providing they follow the EYFS. However, schools (particularly Maintained Nursery Schools) and PVI nurseries report that the complex national funding system is both inefficient and unsustainable at a time of unprecedented financial pressures. A national funding campaign from established sector representatives and unions has been made to government that the level of funding received is not enough to cover the cost of delivering places and has called for reforms.
- 25 The council has 149 schools and 215 PVI providers offering funded places across the county. Durham receives one of the lowest funding rates within the Early Years National Funding Formulae (along with a quarter of other local authorities in England). There is only one rate lower than our base rate of £4.88 for 3–4-year-olds and we receive the lowest rate, £5.63, for two-year-olds.
- 26 Many of our providers are situated in disadvantaged areas and rely solely on the government funding, unlike the larger providers in the more affluent areas, which can help to offset costs through childcare charges for working parents – although they report that the introduction of the funded 30-hour offer and a change in parents' working patterns is negatively affecting their viability.
- 27 As a council, we do everything that we can to ameliorate the funding challenges and passport 95% of the monies we receive directly to providers, along with free training and development, and a grant towards supporting children with special educational needs. A recent funding consultation (January 2023) with early year's providers in the county, reached a majority agreement that our approach was the correct one.

## **Statutory Requirements Assessing Children's Progress**

- 28 There are two statutory assessment requirements within the EYFS, the first is when the child is between 24 months and 36 months. All early years' providers must review the child's development and complete a written report, celebrating where the child is making good progress and identifying any areas of concern, or where progress is not as expected, so that appropriate support and interventions can be put in place swiftly and parents can understand their child's needs and enhance their development at home.
- 29 At the end of the reception year, it is a Statutory requirement for teachers to assess children's learning against 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) set within the EYFS. The Department for Education outlines that 'Children are defined as having reached a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved the expected level for the ELGs in Communication, Personal, Social and Emotional and Physical Development, Mathematics and Literacy.
- 30 The EYFS profile is a statutory data collection. Each child's records are combined at local authority and national level to produce a National Statistics publication. The DfE uses EYFS profile data to monitor changes in levels of children's learning and development both nationally and regionally and to compare the development outcomes of different groups of children such as gender and eligibility for free school meals.  
*\*The EYFS profile is not an accountability measure for schools and the DfE does not publish school level results for the EYFS profile.*

## **Covid Recovery**

### **Early Years' Service and Partnerships**

- 31 It is important to note that we cannot directly compare the published statistics for the GLD in the summer of 2022 against past data, because the DfE modified the EYFS in 2021 and the profile assessment was revised. It is also the first publication since the 2018/19 statistics, as the data collections were cancelled due to the Coronavirus.
- 32 So, we must acknowledge, but treat with caution, the headline figures as we emerge from the pandemic. The statistics released, say that nationally, 65.2% of children achieved a GLD in the summer of 2022. However, when drilling down to the outcomes for disadvantaged children, we see a difference. Only 49.1 % of children eligible for free school meals achieved the GLD, compared to 68.8% of those not known to be eligible for free school meals. That is a 19.6 percentage point gap. In Durham, using the same lens for the data, we see a 22.8 percentage gap.

- 33 The Early Years' Service recognise that the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic may have impacted on what children have learned. This could result in some children having a wider than usual range of starting points and gaps in their knowledge. We are analysing this new data measure, in conjunction with reports from early years leaders and agencies, to guide our work with key partners through the Best Start in Life Steering Group, and are responding with initiatives, support programmes and training in a whole system approach.
- 34 Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the early year's providers continued to provide a crucial service for key workers and a vital support for vulnerable children. The Pandemic brought a visibility to the importance of early years education - from narrowing educational gaps and providing a social space for children to play and learn, to enabling keyworkers to work - and yet despite this visibility, persistent challenges remain for a sector that often feels undervalued by central government. That said, the team are proud of the positive relationship and partnership working arrangement it holds with our early years' workforce and their representatives, who appreciate the inclusion, recognition and proactive support from the local authority. They are enthusiastic supporters of council initiatives with Public Health, Children's Services, and Cost of Living Crisis responses (including the Household Support Grant) in their resolve to support the most disadvantaged children and families accessing their provision.
- 35 The Early Years' Service' are active partners on key council steering groups - Family Hubs, Healthy Weight Alliance, Education Safeguarding group The Poverty Action, Immunisation Steering groups.
- 36 The team work closely with the Department for Education and the Early Years and Childcare Lead sits on two Policy working parties (Covid Recovery and Early Years Funding). The current DfE Early Years Covid recovery programme is expansive, and this is promoted to the sector, and team members are delivering components of the programme on behalf of DfE.

### **Early Years' Service and the Sufficiency Duty**

- 37 The last year has been very difficult for the sector; struggling with recruitment and retention challenges; reports of difficulties include finding staff with the required qualifications and experience, increased cost pressures from the cost-of-living crisis and some children requiring more development support due to lack of experiences during the pandemic.

- 38 Some childcare providers are experiencing sustainability pressures which is also as a result of the changes in working patterns and demand for paid childcare in some areas. At present Durham does not appear to be as adversely affected as other regions in the country who are reporting challenges in meeting their sufficiency duties and a decline in the 2-year take up.

### **Sustainability Support**

- 39 The Early Years' Service provides a universal offer of business advice and support to childcare providers with sustainability risks in conjunction with Business Durham, which has become more important in recent months. A graduated approach is taken to manage the childcare market and the sufficiency duty. The local authority intervenes with short term sustainability funding and remedial business support only when required to ensure there are sufficient places in a local area. Despite closures of 49 Childminders and 3 nurseries, there have been no unsolved brokerage cases, so evidence suggests that, at present, there is sufficient early learning provision with some spare capacity in some areas in the county, but this can be a quickly shifting landscape which has priority focus and is being monitored through data collection and proactive conversations with the sector.

### **Early Years' Service and Quality Improvement**

- 40 Section 13 of the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and training to childcare providers. A dedicated team of Early Years Officers who have extensive knowledge and experience in improving the quality of practice in Early Years settings, work in partnership to raise outcomes for children. The team offer a menu of training and support to the early years workforce within the PVI sector and in schools. The team currently visit/meet all PVI providers on a termly basis but offer increased targeted support to those with a less than good Ofsted outcome or safeguarding concerns/LADO referrals - where there is a local authority Statutory Duty to support quality improvement.
- 41 The types of support reflect the statutory requirements in the EYFS and include safeguarding, curriculum and pedagogy, leadership, supporting children with additional needs, and preparation before or development after an Ofsted inspection. The current focus is centred around supporting the workforce to equip them with knowledge and skills for interventions arising from the impact of Covid – there is currently a strong emphasis on early language and communication, self-regulation and social communication, number sense (in conjunction with the



Multiply Programme) and interventions for children presenting with additional needs.

- 42 Due to the differing working patterns of this sector, this is offered as a hybrid approach of face to face or online training (day/evening/weekends), a CPD interactive magazine, key messages posted on social media, regular email updates and several support briefings for setting leaders with key partners across the council.

## **Conclusion**

- 43 The Early Years' Service provides support to families at a crucial time of their child's development. Perhaps the picture we are seeing as we emerge from Covid reminds us, powerfully, of how important those first 1,000 days are to children's development. Children who were born into lockdowns, or experienced several lockdowns in their first 24 months, didn't have anything close to an ordinary first 1,000 days. We will work quickly and in partnership with other services to support the early years workforce with the intervention tools and knowledge that they need now, and the moral support they need to navigate through circumstances never before experienced. We owe our early years sector, who are working so tirelessly to mitigate any effects of Covid - and every child in our county - the best possible chance to thrive, learn well, and be healthy and happy throughout their childhood and beyond.

## **Background papers**

[Early education and childcare Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)

[Early Years inspection handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision](#)

[School Inspection Handbook](#)

[Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook](#)

[Early Years Recovery programme](#)

[The Community](#)

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**Contact:** Helen Nixon

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Councils have a duty, to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare (including early years provision) for working parents in their area and parents making the transition to work. Other duties deal with a range of matters relating to the assessment and the early years funded entitlements and the provision of information. These duties sit alongside responsibilities for children's social care and safeguarding.

### **Finance**

The funding for early years provision continues to be a challenging environment for schools and settings. As mentioned in the report, the fact that Durham receives one of the lowest funding rates nationally and that many of our providers are situated in disadvantaged areas and rely solely on the government funding, unlike the larger providers in the more affluent areas, which can help to offset costs through childcare charges for working parents. DCC need to provide additional support to ensure these settings can access professional training and support, making efficiencies within their running costs, whilst not compromising safety or standards.

### **Consultation**

Schools Forum are kept up to date with Early Years Reserves and these are redistributed when possible to support running costs. A redistribution was consulted on, and agreed for 2022/23.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Climate Change**

Provision outcomes with Ofsted have a direct correlation with demand for places. The financial vulnerability of some settings may have considerations which would adversely affect the ability of parents to use their local providers and make longer journeys to accommodate children.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

Uncertainty and comparatively low pay rates within the sector are making alternative careers options more attractive.

### **Accommodation**

The provision of safe and educationally stimulating environments, require additional capital considerations which add further budgetary pressures. Settings have to use a range of additional funding options to address some of these funding issues. Examples can be found in AAP applications for funding.

### **Risk**

Insufficient support for EYS would have an adverse effect on our children, their learning and development. Ensuring high quality provision across the county is necessary to reduce the gaps in learning of our most disadvantaged children and communities. Provision for parents and carers, is a key ingredient of the council's future Inclusive Economic Strategy and growth.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

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# The Early Years' Service

## Children & Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10 March 2023



# Early Years and Local Authority Statutory Duties

- Section 6, places a duty on English local authorities to secure sufficient childcare for working parents or in education/training. .
- Section 7 places a duty on English local authorities to secure early years provision free of charge.
- Regulations made under s7 set out the type and amount of free provision and the children who benefit from free provision (funded early years entitlements) .
- Regulations made under section 9A limit the requirements local authorities can impose when they make arrangements to deliver early education places for two-, three- and four year-olds.
- Section 12, which places a duty on English local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents ( Family Information Service).
- Section 12 placing a duty on English local authorities to publish certain information at prescribed intervals.
- Section 13, which places a duty on English local authorities to provide information, advice and training to childcare providers.



# Covid-19 and Children's Experience in Lockdown by age

Age group	Lockdown 1 23 March 2020 PM orders people to 'stay at home'	Lockdown 2 31 October 2020 PM announces a second lockdown to prevent a 'medical and moral disaster' for the NHS	Lockdown 3 6 January 2021 Third national lockdown announced
Reception children 2022-3 DOB between 1.9.17 and 31.8.18	2-3 years old	2-3 years old	2-3 years old
Nursery (3-and 4-year olds) DOB between 1.9.18 and 31.8.19	7 months to 1 year old	1-2 years old	1-2 years old
Nursery (2s) DOB between 1.9.19 and 31.8.20	Birth to 7 months old	2 months to 1 year old	4 months to 1-year old



# Current Challenges in Early Years Sector

National Funding rate for the free entitlement is low and does not cover costs ...more difficult in areas of deprivation

## Workforce

- Retention and Recruitment of staff
- Staff well-being

## Cost of Living Crisis

## The Impact of Covid-19

- Children's experiences
- Impact on Childcare Business sustainability





# Covid Recovery Programme

- Strong focus on Early Language and Communication
- PSED and a focus on co regulation – to support self regulation
- CPD Number Sense – links to Multiply
- Cost of living Crisis – response
- EYFS training for Apprentices and new staff
- Use of evidence informed practice
- DfE funded programmes
- Collaborative work and making links across other initiatives



# Early Years Sector Support



# National Challenges in the Early Years Sector

## Enquiry - Support for childcare in the early years



[parliamentlive.tv](http://parliamentlive.tv)





**Thank you for your  
interest in Early  
Years**

**Always Happy for  
Questions**

**Helen Nixon**

**Lead: Early years and Childcare**

**[Helen.Nixon@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Nixon@durham.gov.uk)**

**03000 268931**

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10 March 2023

### Reducing Parental Conflict in County Durham (Relationships Matter)



## Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services

### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CYP OSC) with an update on Durham's progress on the national Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Programme since CYP OSC's last report in February 2022.

### Executive Summary

- 2 In 2018, the DWP launched the national 'Reducing Parental Conflict' Programme which Durham refers to as 'Relationships Matter'. Research found that children who are exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict can be negatively affected in the short and longer term. Local Authority (LA) areas were awarded grant funding to raise awareness and drive the RPC agenda across the wider partnership/system. The DWP Local Grant will continue to fund LA until 2025 subject to performance.
- 3 Durham has a well-established multi-agency RPC Working Group who drive the agenda and report directly to the Prevention and Early Help Partnership. Progress to date includes a significant number of practitioners and managers across the Early Help system being trained in RPC. The development of a graduated response from information, advice and guidance, self-help, digital tools including on-line parenting programmes to more specialist relationship support programmes such as 'Parenting When Separated' are all part of Durham's offer. Opportunities to strengthen joint working approaches to facilitate early identification of parental conflict is ongoing with midwifery colleagues and Durham Constabulary.

- 4 Durham's RPC Working Group agreed to use the DWP Local Grant to establish an Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) model which is a parent peer support model. Grounded in research and evidence base this would complement Durham's existing 'professional led' parenting offer and go some way in building resilience and capacity in communities but also increase engagement and help remove stigma in parents requesting and accepting help. Furthermore, the group identified priorities such as progressing the work already started relating to how effective we are as a system at engaging Dads/Male Carers in Family Support work which is integral when wanting to improve the co-parenting relationship. The group also wanted to explore how we could work more creatively and effectively with regional neighbours to deliver the agenda.
- 5 Embedding the RPC agenda is not without its challenge and there is a worry that thus far identification of parental conflict remains too high and is overlooked at a lower, universal level. As RPC is fundamental to the national Family Hub developments it is a real opportunity to knit the two agendas together and embed within the Best Start for Life universal offer. It is also a hope to increase uptake of the digital self-help parenting programme that is available as part of Durham's graduated response to parental conflict.
- 6 Priority areas for 2023 are to offer a flexible model of 'Parenting When Separated' (specialist intervention) to be more flexible, accessible and inclusive; further develop Durham's EPEC Hub; progress work to better engage Dad/Male Carers and work with regional neighbours to develop consistent messages and approaches.
- 7 In summary however, Durham has a vibrant partnership group driving the RPC agenda and has made good progress. There is an awareness of where we need to make improvements and we have a clear focus and drive to achieve these. All awarded funding to date has been utilised to progress Durham's RPC priorities.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 8 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
  - (a) Note the contents of the report and the progress of the development and implementation of Reducing Parental Conflict support in Count Durham.

## Background

- 9 Parents play a critical role in giving children the experiences and skills they need to succeed. However, studies have found that children who are exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict can be negatively affected in the short and longer term. It can impact on children's mental health, their early emotional and social development, their educational attainment and employability, limiting their chances to lead fulfilling, happy lives.
- 10 The national research shows that in 2017-18, 12% of children in couple-parent families were living with at least one parent reporting relationship distress. Children living in workless families are 2 times more likely to experience parental conflict than in families where both parents are in work. Further research can be found at Early Intervention Foundation.
- 11 In 2018, the government launched the Reducing Parent Conflict (RPC) Programme, which aims to promote improved outcomes for children, with a focus on disadvantaged families.
- 12 The aims of the programme are to:
  - (a) increase awareness and understanding of the impact of parental conflict on children across all relevant organisations;
  - (b) develop further understanding among senior leaders and commissioners of local needs in relation to parental conflict;
  - (c) increase capacity in responding to parents/separated parents/expectant parents with relationship difficulties;
  - (d) up-skill the workforce to increase the confidence of staff to work proactively with parents around relationships; *and*
  - (e) improve support to parents using a range of digital platforms and media.
- 13 On commencement of the RPC Programme a multi-agency RPC Working Group was established in Durham to steer the agenda and provide governance and accountability of how funding was spent, how partners were performing and what impact this was having on reducing the impact of parental conflict on children and young people.
- 14 In March 2022, the specialist interventions which Durham and neighbouring authorities had as part of a Northeast Package, commissioned by Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), came to the end of its contract. However, in March 2022, the DWP announced a further 3-year extension of the national RPC Programme between (2022-25). LA areas were asked to apply for a new round of funding,

known as the RPC Local Grant, and using a Theory of Change model outline how they would further drive the RPC agenda in their area. Durham's multi-agency RPC Working Group identified the following priorities they wished to progress using Local Grant funding:

- (a) Establish an Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) Hub in Durham to deliver a range of parent/peer led parenting programmes
  - (b) Better engage Dads/Male Carers in Family Support
  - (c) Review Durham's public facing 'Relationships Matter' website with a view to developing an agreed Northeast regional digital platform
  - (d) Market and promote a range of parental conflict/relationships matter support materials to families and to practitioners from across the system including those in universal and targeted services
- 15 Subject to ongoing performance management by the DWP, Durham has been awarded £67,959.85 for 2022-23, £53,046.75 for 2023-24 and £53,198.93 for 2024-25. This offers a real opportunity for Durham to develop a graduated menu of relationship support to Durham families based on an i-THRIVE model.

## **Progress and Impact**

- 16 As of January 2023, 625 practitioners have completed RPC Training which has evolved since 2019 and now incorporates training on the use of Digital Tools and One Plus One's 'How to Argue Better'. 507 practitioners and managers have attended Staff Briefing Sessions and 24 practitioners have been trained in the specialist intervention 'Parenting When Separated'. Durham chose to establish a 'Train the Trainer' model to help build a sustainable workforce development programme. The impact training has had on frontline practitioners can be evidenced. Post training evaluations report that practitioners/managers have an improved knowledge of RPC and improved confidence in talking to families about relationship quality and finding the right help. A small case audit (in 2021) supported these findings and found evidence in practitioner's recordings of parental conflict being discussed with parents/carers, and most importantly with children and young people. The audit is being repeated again in March 2023 using a regionally agreed auditing tool to help demonstrate the continued impact on practice from workforce development.
- 17 An additional Durham RPC E-Learning module is in development to contribute to our Workforce Development offer which is targeted at Schools and partners who may not directly deliver whole family support



but who play a crucial role in identifying Parental Conflict. This is due to be rolled out from April 2023.

- 18 Durham's current graduated model of support consists of a digital offer through a parent/carer developed 'Relationships Matter' website which hosts information, advice, guidance, top tips and 3 on-line Parenting Courses. Durham also purchased 'Getting on Better' cards which have been distributed to all Durham's expectant parents. Durham has a system-wide trained workforce in Reducing Parental Conflict and One Plus One's 'How to Argue Better' who can have open and honest conversations with parents, carers, children and young people about relationship quality and how to improve it. Durham also has the specialist intervention, 'Parenting When Separated' (Parents Plus), for parents who are separated/ considering separation and later in 2023 will be delivering, 'Being A Parent Together' which will be delivered by parents to parents (EPEC model) and is for parents who are together and experiencing relationship distress. Appendix 2 is a brief case study of two parents attending 'Parenting When Separated', names have been changed to protect identity.
- 19 By training the workforce on the importance of healthy relationships and educating them on the impact parental conflict has on children, we are ensuring that positive co-parenting is understood through practitioner assessments, is a key feature in Child and Family Plans and weaved within existing provision such as universal Health Needs Assessments, Expectant Parenting Packs, Young Parent Programme and a range of Parenting Programmes. This is in an attempt to remove stigma around the topic and therefore remove barriers to parents/carers receiving relationship support.
- 20 Durham is working closely with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to ensure parental conflict and relationship support is at the heart of Durham's Family Hub offer.
- 21 Durham is working closely with regional LAs and, where possible, collaboratively developing joint communications through an RPC Northeast (NE) Twitter page. A shared NE Relationships Matter webpage is in development to provide a single point for parent/carers, children and young people to access which will then direct them to their respective LA sites where they will find local support. This is also useful for partners who work cross-boundary who are signposting families.
- 22 It has been agreed for Durham's Young Parent Programme (YPP) to work with Changing Futures (CF) Northeast and, as part of a pilot, support young parents to work through any conflict with their co-parent or extended family members. This is to support them in being able to establish a positive Family Support Network in line with Durham's Signs

of Safety practice model. By helping young parents identify the most important people to them and by removing potential barriers to those individuals offering support to the young parent, this network will help empower and build family resilience. The pilot will commence in February 2023 and run for approximately 4-6 months. CF Northeast are in the process of applying to Challenge Fund to extend the pilot and will be notified of the outcome in the coming months.

- 23 During the course of the RPC Working Group a primary school 'Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) Learning Resource' was developed by one of Durham's Head Teachers and the LA's Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Advisor, with an accompanying E-Learning Module. This was to help support schools in actively encouraging children and young people to discuss relationships and also establish a school culture to positively role model healthy relationships. Unfortunately, despite best efforts this has not 'landed' in schools. Feedback has been minimal and reflected a difficult time in schools currently, where other priorities, post Covid, have had to take priority. Where these resources have been used, schools have fed back that they found them useful, and they have raised awareness amongst all school staff. School colleagues have not felt they needed the lesson plans as their "bought in" PSHE curriculum schemes have covered healthy relationships and conflict for pupils. It is therefore being proposed, by the RPC Working Group, to develop a staff training session/workshop which will be recorded and can be used in a group or individual basis to support continued professional development. Plans are in their infancy, but it is hoped potential roll out would commence from September 2023.
- 24 As reported in Overview and Scrutiny's last RPC Briefing, Durham's 2021 RPC Community Engagement Commission's findings mirrored the national challenge of engaging Dads/Male Carers in relationship/co-parenting support. This was the catalyst for Durham in reviewing how, across the system, we can better engage Dads/Male Carers in all family support work.
- 25 Durham has made good progress and now has an established Dad/Males Project Group, developed a comprehensive and multi-faceted Project Plan and has 15 practitioners trained as 'Dads Champions'. In scope of the project is to recruit Durham Dads/Male Carers to form a 'reference group' which will help shape the services we offer to families that feel more inclusive to Dads/Male Carers. We are using DfE funded 'Behavioural Insights' Research that has been carried out with Durham Dads/Male Carers to ensure marketing and promotional materials are appealing and inclusive to all. Although in its infancy this group will influence Family Hub developments with RPC being an integral part of Durham's offer.

- 26 Durham's RPC Working Group continue to work closely with Durham Constabulary colleagues and are in the process of delivering refresher training to Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Parental Conflict to enable them to differentiate between Parental Conflict and Domestic Abuse more accurately. A pathway has been developed which aims to support the Police in identifying, reporting and connecting families to the right support, by the right service at the earliest opportunity.
- 27 In line with 'County Durham Together's' vision of building family and community resilience, from findings from Durham's Community Engagement Commission and using RPC Local Grant funding we have embarked on a peer parent support model called 'Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC). This model of parent peer delivery will complement Durham's existing Parent and Wellbeing Programme offer. An EPEC Coordinator has been appointed to establish an EPEC Hub (virtual) for Durham. The response from partners has been extremely positive and parent/carers are enthused by this new offer which is aimed at harnessing the skills of Durham's own Parent/Carers, empowering them as the experts in their own lives to support their peers. This also goes some way in trying to remove barriers and stigma attached to parent/carers seeking professional support or simply asking for help. 6 Train the Trainers (including 2 parents) and 4 Parent Group Leaders have completed training in 'Being A Parent'. 'Being A Parent' is a universal programme aimed at parents of 2-11 year olds. Durham's first tranche of delivery by parents to parents started mid-January 2023 and 20 parents are attending. This is extremely exciting for Durham and the next level of training in 'Being A Parent Together', which has a Parental Conflict theme, is in progress. This model will help strengthen the sustainability of relationship support for families in Durham at a community level. Appendix 3 provides quotes from Durham parents who which have trained as Parent Group Leaders (PGL) and from parents attending the course delivered by PGLs.

## **Challenges**

- 28 Despite Durham making good progress in accordance with DWP expectations and performance (Management Information returns), the RPC Working Group do not feel that the RPC Agenda is 'landing' at a universal level and identification still remains at too higher level. Case discussions and referrals for support evidence that parental conflict is being identified when there is 'significant' conflict, albeit not domestic abuse, and could have been identified at a much earlier stage. To address this we are using the Family Hub agenda to refocus practitioners during their universal contact and support with families.
- 29 As part of Durham's graduated response, and at the request of parent/carers a suite of 3 x on-line parenting programmes were

commissioned to provide the 'self-help' offer that was being requested. Reports tell us that very few parents are accessing these. To address this, we have developed a specific briefing for practitioners on how to use the Digital Tools with families. Additionally, we are reviewing Durham's Relationships Matter Webpage where these are promoted, advertising in Early Help Newsletters and have plans to create a QR code resource for Health colleagues in the hope to increase uptake.

## **Future Plans**

- 30 We intend to promote and build on the offer of 'Parenting When Separated' (PWS) by offering both a face to face option and a digital offer. This is what some families are asking for and would remove some barriers of transport and childcare. Many Dads/Male Carers have also said they would be able to engage in the programme after work, on an evening, therefore providing a more inclusive and accessible offer.
- 31 We intend to continue to support and develop relationship support using the RPC agenda in and through Family Hubs.
- 32 Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) requires significant time and investment to develop Durham's (virtual) EPEC Hub. Recruitment of parents to become 'Parent Group Leaders' (PGL) is critical as this is the premise of EPEC which is to deliver a peer support model. PGL's being trained in 'Being A Parent Together', which has an RPC focus, builds on the EPEC foundation module of 'Being A Parent'. This is a key priority as is integral to the Family Hub offer and also funded through the DWP Local Grant.
- 33 Durham will continue to work closely with regional neighbours to promote the importance of healthy parental relationships in a consistent and structured way to families and to partners. Shared learning and pooling of resources and ideas means collectively our approach to RPC is much more efficient and hopefully more impactful. The development of a shared regional digital platform is planned for April 2023 and will also provide the potential for future social media/radio campaigns at a regional level (subject to funding).
- 34 Engaging Dads and Male Carers will remain essential to the effective delivery of parental relationship support therefore progressing Durham's Dade/Male Carers Project Plan and applying the findings of the DfE funded Behavioural Insights research will also be a priority for 2023.

## **Conclusion**

- 35 Research tells us that parental conflict can have significant, long term negative impact on a range of outcomes for children and young people. Removing stigma for families accessing relationships support is a

priority for partners in Durham. To date, Durham has progressed the national RPC Programme well and continues to embed relationship help through a graduated menu of support available to parent/carers, children and young people from digital, self-help tools through to specialist interventions. Durham's focus for 2023 is to establish the parent peer led model, EPEC and support, grow and nurture the lived experience of Durham's parent/carers. Durham will continue to work closely with regional neighbours to embed the importance of healthy co-parenting relationships on outcomes for children and young people.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- None

### **Author(s)**

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Tel: 03000 261 670

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications. The DWP Reducing Parental Conflict Programme is not mandated and DWP funding is paid in arrears to LAs on actual spend.

### **Finance**

The Reducing Parental Conflict Programme is funded by the DWP. Durham is performance managed by the DWP through quarterly Management Information returns. Funding is paid in arrears to LAs on actual spend.

### **Consultation**

None

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Equality of opportunity for parents and carers to access Reducing Parental Conflict support.

### **Climate Change**

None

### **Human Rights**

Equal opportunities

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

None

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## **Appendix 2: Case study - Parenting when separated**

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*(Names changed to protect identity)*

### **Sarah (Residential Parent) Craig (Non – Residential Parent)**

At the start of the programme, it was evident that the relationship between Sarah and Craig was acrimonious. Both spoke poorly of each other, and both were hurt by each other's actions, and believed that each other were in the wrong.

Moving into week 4 of the programme, Sarah has stated that she has begun sharing more information about the children with Craig as she knows that he is missing out on part of the week by not being there all the time. Sarah has been able to identify how Craig will be feeling by not being with the children all of the time.

Sarah has stated that they now know not to react and think the worst of each other. Sarah stated that she had an appointment so had asked Craig to collect the children a little later than agreed. Sarah stated that Craig was not happy with this and sent texts that he wanted to collect the children earlier instead. Craig and Sarah stated that generally this scenario would have ended with them arguing back and forth. They both said that they took a deep breath and politely agreed that Craig could collect the children early. They both recognised that this saved the children from seeing both parents angry, which would have escalated from text to face to face when the children were collected.

Craig and Sarah both report that already the children look more relaxed and happier when handing over for contact.

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## **Appendix 3: Quotes From Durham Parents**

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### **The following are quotes from Durham parents who have been trained as Parent Group Leaders and delivering training to other Durham parents:**

“The PGL training has helped me develop so many skills and I have a newfound confidence in myself. I was supported all the way through the training and the course was interactive and fun; it was the favourite part of my week!”

“I love that the EPEC course is delivered **by** parents **for** parents. The "being a parent" programme gives parents and carers a chance to come together and learn together in a non-judgemental environment. Absolutely everyone can learn something new and can take something valuable away from it...even if that is making a new or the realisation that you are not alone.”

“Great experience personally as a parent. It showed me how to deconstruct and use the clear simplistic parenting strategies that have been extremely useful, especially for moments we think we could handle in better ways. Continuous use has reduced miscommunication and has begun the process of understanding how they feel as individuals and as a family. We learnt to empower ourselves, our children, our family and our community”

### **The following are quotes from parents who are attending the ‘Being A Parent’ course which is facilitated by other Durham parents (Parent Group Leaders):**

“Don’t feel pressured or like your being judged”

“I attend because it’s parents teaching us not professionals so different vibes”

“I learn something new each session”

“I learn from parents as everyone has kids so understands”

“I love talking to other parents”

“It’s a local, comfortable environment, ran by parents not ‘professionals’, friendly, kind, caring, understanding, very helpful and brilliant strategies”

“parents understand”

“I feel like a better parent already, listening to REAL parents”



“Couldn’t have chosen better people to run the course”

“It makes you feel more at home and not lie you’re being judged”

“Non-judgemental. Some things we do as Mams probably aren’t textbook, but others understand”

“makes you feel comfortable”

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# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny 10 March 2023

## Reducing Parental Conflict “Relationships Matter”

Fiona Smith  
Operations Manager, One Point Service  
Early Help Inclusion and Vulnerable Children  
CYPS

## Definition

**Parental conflict is defined as a situation when arguments and disagreements between parents are frequent and poorly resolved, however there is not an imbalance of power or fear.**

**Conflict can range from a lack of warmth and emotional distance, right through to swearing and shouting. The relationship might be classed as “difficult” but it is not abusive.**

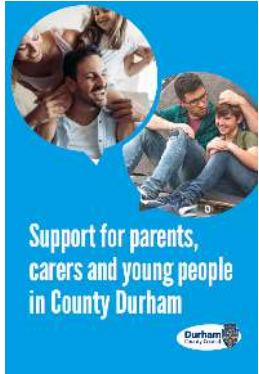
## Overview

- 2018 - DWP launched the national 'Reducing Parental Conflict' Programme which Durham refers to as 'Relationships Matter'
- Research found that children who are exposed to frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict can be negatively affected in the short and longer term.
- Local Authority areas were awarded grant funding to raise awareness and drive the RPC agenda across the wider partnership/system
- The DWP Local Grant will continue to fund LA until 2025 subject to performance and impact

# Parental Conflict - Impact on Children and Young People



# Durham's Journey



EMPOWERING PARENTS  
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



## Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children





# Durham's Graduated Approach



**Early Years 0-12 months**  
 Herdon Family Centre  
 9.30am - 10.30am  
 Wednesday  
 Commencing 16 September 2019 for 10 weeks

The sessions focus on different topics each week to support your child's development and include fun activities and safety advice for your child.

For more information or to book a place, please visit our Herdon Family Centre on 01662 262773.

One Plus One (Durham) Ltd

**Getting On Better 2021**  
 OWIRRAL  
 Stages + changes of relationships: for parents

Relationships change over time. What stage are you at? What could this mean for your relationship? Flip the card to find out.

Remorse, Resentment, Frustration, Mutual respect, love and understanding, Acceptance of each other.



**EMPOWERING PARENTS**  
**EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**



**ParentsPlus**  
 Empowering Professionals to Support Families

**Parenting when Separated Course**

## Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children





## Parent Peer Support (delivered by parents for parents)

**"It's a local, comfortable environment, ran by parents not 'professionals', friendly, kind, caring, understanding, very helpful and brilliant strategies"**

**"Don't feel pressured or like your being judged"**

**"I attend because it's parents teaching us not professionals so different vibes"**

**"I learn something new each session"**

**"I feel like a better parent already, listening to REAL parents"**

**"The PGL training has helped me develop so many skills and I have a newfound confidence in myself. I was supported all the way through the training and the course was interactive and fun; it was the favourite part of my week!"**



**EMPOWERING  
PARENTS  
EMPOWERING  
COMMUNITIES**

**Durham**  
County Council



# Next Steps



EMPOWERING  
PARENTS  
EMPOWERING  
COMMUNITIES



**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FAMILY HUBS**  **Anna Freud**  
National Centre for Children and Families

**Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children**





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**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**10 March 2023**

**Schools Ofsted Update and  
Educational Attainment**



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**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young  
People's Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of with an update of recent Ofsted inspections of County Durham's maintained schools and educational outcomes in County Durham in 2022.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously received information relating to the educational achievements of children and young people in County Durham and performance of its schools in relation to Ofsted inspections.
- 3 Included in the committee's work programme is an update on the performance of the county's maintained schools and a summary of educational outcomes.

**Recommendations**

- 4 That Members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the information contained in the report and presentation and comment accordingly.

**Background**

- 5 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme for 2022/2023 at its meeting on 7 July 2022. Included in the work programme was an item that would provide

members with information on Ofsted inspections of County Durham’s maintained schools and an overview of the educational attainment outcomes achieved by children and young people in the county.

6 In accordance with that decision arrangements have been made for the Head of Education and Skills to attend a meeting of Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 March 2023 to provide a presentation that will focus on the following areas:

- Ofsted Inspections from September 2022
- Ofsted Inspection Outcomes for different School Categories
- Summary Outcome data for children in Durham Schools by Key Stage (Not comparable to previous Years)

### Summary school Inspection Outcomes

7 The following three tables show the Ofsted inspection outcomes for Durham compared to national and regional outcomes as at 31 January 2023.

<b>Nursery and Primary</b>	<b>Durham (All 222 - schools)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Regional</b>
Outstanding	15%	16%	16%
Good	76%	74%	77%
Requires Improvement	7%	8%	6%
Inadequate	2%	2%	1%

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Durham (All 29 - schools)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Regional</b>
Outstanding	23%	17%	15%
Good	47%	64%	60%
Requires Improvement	23%	13%	16%
Inadequate	7%	6%	9%

<b>Special</b>	<b>Durham (All 9 - schools)</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Regional</b>
Outstanding	11%	37%	28%
Good	78%	53%	61%
Requires Improvement	11%	6%	8%
Inadequate	0%	4%	3%

- 8 The following table shows the published school inspection outcomes taken place since September 2022.

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Special</b>
Outstanding	1	0	0
Good	15	2	1
Requires Improvement	2	1	0
Inadequate	1	0	0

## Summary school Outcomes Data

### Key Stage 2

	<b>Expected</b>		<b>Higher/Greater Depth</b>	
	<b>Durham</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Durham</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Reading</b>	73.3	75.0	25.0	28.2
<b>Maths</b>	70.9	71.7	18.8	22.6
<b>Writing</b>	69.5	69.7	12.5	12.9
<b>RWM</b>	57.5	59.0	6.1	7.3

- 9 The headline results in Durham are all below national. The gaps to national are narrowest in Writing, for both Expected and Greater Depth

standards. They are largest in Reading. The gap at Higher standard in Maths is markedly larger than the gap at Expected standard.

### Key Stage 4

	Durham	National	NE
Average A8	47.2	48.8	46.8
4+ in EBacc English component	76.6	78.9	76.7
4+ in EBacc Maths component	68.9	72.8	69.5
E&M 4+	65.0	68.8	65.6
5+ in EBacc English component	61.6	65.5	63.1
5+ in EBacc Maths component	49.7	54.7	50.3
E&M 5+	44.9	49.8	45.8
Progress 8	-0.22	-0.03	NA

- 10 Durham results are below national on all measures. They are in-line with or slightly behind regional rates for percentages attaining grades 4 and 5 but above the regional result for average A8 score.

	Durham	National
Average A8	37.6	37.7
E&M 4+	45.6	48.6
E&M 5+	26.0	29.8
Progress 8	-0.62	-0.54

### Key Stage 5

- 11 A-level results – state-funded schools only



	Durham	National
APS	39.7	38.2
APS per best 3	41.3	38.8
AAB+ in 2+ facilitating subjects	24.4	22.3

- 12 Durham's Average points score remained above national. The APS across best 3 results moved above the national having been below in 2021.

#### Applied general

	Durham	National
APS per entry	38.0	33.3

- 13 Nationally this outcome is lower than for 2021. Durham's is also lower, but it did not fall as much and remains above national.

#### Tech Level

	Durham	National
APS per entry	39.2	34.9

- 14 Having been below national in 2021, Durham's pupils' out-performed their peers on this measure in 2022.

### Conclusion

- 15 Children and young people have over the last two years suffered disruption to their education on a scale not seen before and therefore it is important that members are aware of the children and young people's achievements and how our schools are performing.

### Background papers

- [KS4 local authority data from Key stage 4 performance](#)

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**Contact:** Jim Murray

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The actions described in this report are intended to comply with the Council's duty to exercise its education functions with a view to promoting high standards and the fulfilment of each pupil's learning potential in accordance with S 13 A of the Education Act 1996.

Schools deemed to be inadequate by Ofsted are now given an Academy Order by the DfE meaning that they will be directed to join a strong Multi-Academy Trust.

From September 2022, Schools who have not achieved a 'Good' or better grade for overall effectiveness in the last two inspections, may also be directed in this way.

### **Finance**

Schools achieving a less than 'Good' inspection outcome, often experience a change in first choice applications which can affect their pupil related income factors. Similarly, DCC will provide additional leadership support for maintained schools in this category. This is supported through de-delegation agreed at schools Forum. This fund has reduced as more schools choose to academise. The maintained monitoring, Improvement and brokering grant has been removed by the DfE removing 800k, annually of DCC funding for school improvement work.

### **Consultation**

School Improvement delegated funds are requested annually, consultation through Schools forum in the Autumn Term

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Any change in the quality of educational provision in an area has the potential to adversely impact on protected characteristics, both in terms of pupils, their families, local communities, and employees working in the schools. The direct impact of negative Ofsted inspections could involve pupils being required to attend different schools or not being able to access a local school and being required to travel further.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

## **Climate Change**

School outcomes with Ofsted have a direct correlation on first choice applications for school places. The vulnerability of some schools may have financial viability considerations which would adversely affect the ability of many children, to walk to their local school.

## **Crime and Disorder**

None

## **Staffing**

Schools identified as 'Requiring Improvement' or 'Inadequate', can struggle to attract applicants for key positions, particularly around shortage subjects or leadership positions. The financial implications of falling rolls could lead to staffing adjustment and restructuring to address deficit budgets.

## **Accommodation**

Transfer of maintained schools to become academies may have implications in terms of accommodation where school premises are used by the community under arrangements set up with a maintained school.

## **Risk**

A key risk is that, because of actions taken by the County Council (including the failure to make timely interventions), pupils and students do not receive an adequate education. There is an additional risk of reputational damage if the Council does not appear to be able resolve the problem of schools operating with significant and sometimes increasing budgetary difficulties and allows some schools to continue to set deficit budgets whilst requiring other schools to balance their budgets.

The s.151 officer must sign-off the budget for schools with a deficit budget plan and needs to be able to justify doing so in terms of each school having a robust plan to recover from its deficit. The scheme of delegation allows for deficit budgets, but only for three years, and no more than 20% of the school's budget share, up to a maximum of £750,000. There is a risk of legal challenge from the Department for Education if this statutory function is neglected. There is a risk of external auditors calling into question the actions of the s.151 officer if no credible plans are agreed to resolve the issues described in this report.

## **Procurement**

Not applicable

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Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
10 March 2023

# **Schools Ofsted Update and Educational Attainment**

Jim Murray  
Head of Education and Skills



# Ofsted inspections

Outcomes as at 31 January 2023, published inspections only

**Nursery & Primary school inspections:**

	Durham (All 222 - schools)	National	Regional
Outstanding	15%	16%	16%
Good	76%	74%	77%
Requires Improvement	7%	8%	6%
Inadequate	2%	2%	1%



# Ofsted inspections

As at 31 January 2023, published inspections only

## Secondary school inspections

	Durham (All 29 - schools)	National	Regional
Outstanding	23%	17%	15%
Good	47%	64%	60%
Requires Improvement	23%	13%	16%
Inadequate	7%	6%	9%



# Ofsted inspections

As at 31 January 2023, published inspections only

## Special school inspections

	Durham (All 9 - schools)	National	Regional
Outstanding	11%	37%	28%
Good	78%	53%	61%
Requires Improvement	11%	6%	8%
Inadequate	0%	4%	3%





# Ofsted inspections

Schools inspected since September 2022, published inspections only

	Primary	Secondary	Special
Outstanding	1	0	0
Good	15	2	1
Requires Improvement	2	1	0
Inadequate	1	0	0



# Ofsted inspections

Schools inspected since September 2022, published inspections only

	Durham (23 - schools)	
Improved	6	26%
Remained the same	12	52%
Declined	5	22%



# KS2 Outcomes

	Expected		Higher/Greater Depth	
	Durham	National	Durham	National
<b>Reading</b>	73.3	75.0	25.0	28.2
<b>Maths</b>	70.9	71.7	18.8	22.6
<b>Writing</b>	69.5	69.7	12.5	12.9
<b>RWM</b>	57.5	59.0	6.1	7.3



# KS4 Outcomes

	Durham	National	NE
<b>Average A8</b>	47.2	48.8	46.8
<b>4+ in EBacc English component</b>	76.6	78.9	76.7
<b>4+ in EBacc Maths component</b>	68.9	72.8	69.5
<b>E&amp;M 4+</b>	65.0	68.8	65.6
<b>5+ in EBacc English component</b>	61.6	65.5	63.1
<b>5+ in EBacc Maths component</b>	49.7	54.7	50.3
<b>E&amp;M 5+</b>	44.9	49.8	45.8
<b>Progress 8</b>	-0.22	-0.03	NA



# KS4 Outcomes

	Durham	National
Average A8	37.6	37.7
E&M 4+	45.6	48.6
E&M 5+	26.0	29.8
Progress 8	-0.62	-0.54



# KS5 Outcomes

	Durham	National
<b>APS</b>	39.7	38.2
<b>APS per best 3</b>	41.3	38.8
<b>AAB+ in 2+ facilitating subjects</b>	24.4	22.3

## Applied General

	Durham	National
<b>APS per entry</b>	38.0	33.3

## Tech Level

	Durham	National
<b>APS per entry</b>	39.2	34.9



Questions?



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