



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

**Date**      **Friday 22 September 2023**

**Time**      **9.30 am**

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

---

### **Business**

#### **Part A**

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

1. Apologies for absence
2. Substitute Members
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 July 2023 (Pages 3 - 12)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any
5. Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
6. Child Poverty in County Durham
  - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 13 - 54)
  - b) Presentation by the Strategic Manager One Point and Think Family Services (Pages 55 - 64)
7. Home to School Transport Outcomes
  - a) Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services; the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 65 - 90)
  - b) Presentation by Operations Manager (Pages 91 - 110)
8. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2022 - Report of the Portfolio Holder Children and Young People's Service and the Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel (Pages 111 - 152)
9. Quarter Four: Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23 and Quarter One: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24 - Report of the Corporate Director of Resources (Pages 153 - 180)
10. Quarter One 2023/24 Performance Management Report

- a) Report of the Chief Executive Officer (Pages 181 - 214)
  - b) Presentation by the Corporate Equalities and Strategy Manager (Pages 215 - 222)
11. CAMHS Waiting Times - Report for Information (Pages 223 - 226)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

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

County Hall  
Durham  
14 September 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 Crute, S Deinali, K Fantarrow, J Griffiths, K Hawley, C Hunt, L Kennedy, C Lines, L Mavin, M McGaun, D Mulholland, K Rooney, J Scurfield, M Simmons, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock and M Walton

**Faith Communities Representatives:**  
Mrs L Vollans

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

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

---

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

---

## 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 **Thursday 6 July 2023 at 9.30 am**

#### Present:

**Councillor A Reed (Chair)**

#### Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Cosslett, B Coult (substitute for M Simmons), R Crute, S Deinali, J Griffiths, L Mavin, M McGaun, D Mulholland, K Robson (substitute for C Lines), K Rooney, J Scurfield, E Waldock and M Walton

#### Co-opted Member:

Ms A Gunn

#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Bell, K Fantarrow, C Hunt, C Lines, M Simmons, S Townsend and Ms R Evans.

#### 2 Substitute Members

Councillor K Robson substituted for Councillor C Lines and Councillor B Coult substituted for Councillor M Simmons.

#### 3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

#### 4 Declarations of Interest

Councillors S Deinali and J Griffiths declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programme as both were part of an organisation that benefited from the programme.

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

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

## **6 Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programme (Fun with Food) in County Durham)**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's services that provided Members on the progress of Durham's Fun and Food programme during 2022 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Child Poverty Operations Manager was in attendance to deliver a presentation that provided details of the funding; the County Durham delivery model; the number of projects funded and the number of children engaged; other developments; challenges, communications and marketing (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

Councillor Crute commented that the scheme does make a difference and the point was reinforced by some of the comments by the children in the video and the report. He stated that the scheme was locality based around the AAP structure and depending on a report going to Cabinet next week there was potential to change the structure to local networks and asked the Officer if they foresee any problems transferring the project from one structure to another. He commented that any scheme was only as good as its weakest link and one of the challenges was non attendance by children who had been booked onto activities. Whilst asking how this could be prevented, he stated that overall, it was a positive scheme.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager responded that only part of the funding was through the AAP, and they did not foresee any problems with regard to the AAP areas as they had coverage across all areas. They had incidents where organisations had wanted to deliver across more than one AAP area, and they had supported them to co-ordinate that. They were in year three of the DfE funding and stated that all the AAPs work well together and there was an element of flexibility as families could cross over boundaries. In terms of the no shows, this was an issue nationally and the DfE were aware of it but left it up to each local authority to manage bookings. In Durham they allowed people to make their own bookings.

In response to a question from Councillor Walton, the Child Poverty Operations Manager indicated that some families were only engaging for the trips out and did not take part in centre-based activities which was against the ethos of the programme. In view of this, they shifted the criteria in what groups could apply for to ensure that it delivered enriching activities. In order to be eligible for funding an application should have centre-based activity and on the back of that could offer a maximum of three trips over the six-week holidays.

Councillor Walton commented that at her local centre when children get dropped off or picked up, they coordinate with local support networks to provide information and give out leaflets.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager indicated that they were working with credit union to conduct some focus campaign over the holidays to talk to parents and families.

Councillor Coult referred to the half term fun and food that had funding until February 2024 and asked what steps were taken to ensure that the programme continued and if AAPs were oversubscribed, do they prioritise the next time.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager responded that she was preparing a report to feedback to the steering group to look for guidance for additional funding or if they needed to go to external funders. Each AAP was allocated funding based on children eligible for free school meals and were required to apply each holiday time so there was no preference, each application would be looked at on face value.

Councillor Scurfield stated that the funding regime focused on children who were eligible for free school meals and asked what targets and expectations they placed on providers to be focused on how they were engaging young people and was the programme looking to ensure they were getting to the right children and families more effectively.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager indicated that as part of the application process they had to identify how they were going to target and engage with those who were eligible for free school meals and those who were vulnerable. They worked with groups to support them to reach the right groups, they did not have a set target they wanted groups to aspire to 50% free school meal eligible children. She continued by stating that they encourage groups to engage with more children who are vulnerable and eligible for free school meals. The DfE do allow a 15% slippage to engage with children who are not eligible for free school meals. She stated that a lot of voluntary sector partners brought matched funding so they could offer to children who were not eligible for free school meals. At the end of each holiday period, they provided data to each group on the number of children expected to be on the system and the number of children who were eligible.

Councillor Scurfield asked if 50% of children eligible for free school meals was the target for the programme.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager responded that this was the target for Durham.

Mrs Gunn asked what the actual engagement was for people eligible for free school meals.

The Child Poverty Operations Manager indicated that last year 40% of children engaged who were eligible for free school meals.

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

*Councillor J Griffiths left the meeting at 10.26 am*

## **7 Update of the Starting Well Partnership**

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Starting Well Partnership and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that update Members on the work of the Starting Well Partnership (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Commissioning Manager for Children's Services, County Durham Integrated Commissioning Team was in attendance to deliver a presentation that highlighted the following (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes):

- What the partnership does and who is part of it
- Updates from the previous annual presentation
- Projects and programmes delivered in 2022/23
- Partnership priorities for 2023/2024
- Ongoing projects and programmes
- Overview of the challenges faced within the Partnership

Councillor Deinali asked for further information on the integrated therapies in schools, in particular what this would look like in schools.

The Commissioning Manager responded that they were going for a fully integrated service that was embedded in the classroom by upskilling the education staff in the classroom.

Councillor Deinali asked if the impact of the pilot scheme could be shared with Members. This was agreed by the Commissioning Manager.

Councillor Robson asked what career guidance was provided to those who were about to leave care.

The Commissioning Manager indicated that this came under the preparation for adulthood work stream that they had not planned yet but in the annual update next year they would be able to share their findings.

Councillor Mavin asked how the pilot differed to what was already happening in schools.

The Commissioning Manager indicated that currently it was not always a therapist that was working with the child and a number of children go out of school for their therapy appointment and they were trying to minimise this.

Councillor Walton referred to the priorities for 2023/24 and that she had not heard of 'Know Your Place' and asked for feedback on the top 10 challenges faced by practitioners. The Commissioning Manager agreed to bring these back to Members.

Mrs Gunn referred to the integrated therapies and was surprised to hear that this was not happening already in schools. She continued by asking how the council compared to other local authorities who were currently offering integrated therapies in schools. She commented that it was only aspirational to roll it out to mainstream schools as it impacts on other areas such as mental health. She stated that children do not have access to Educational Psychologists as schools only received 2 days per year which is 2 children which is only scratching the surface.

The Commissioning Manager stated that the aspiration to roll out integrated therapy in mainstream schools was aspirational as they currently did not have fully staffed teams in the Trust. They were focusing on special schools and if they could fully staff the therapy team then they should be able to roll out to mainstream schools. She commented that they needed Educational Psychologists, but they were not there to recruit.

Mrs Gunn asked if Educational Psychologists were moving to the private sector for better pay.

The Commissioning Manager responded that the work in the NHS is very pressured as they did not have enough staff, so people leave to go to the private sector that creates more pressure on the NHS. She stated that it was difficult to encourage people to come back to the NHS. She referred to identifying needs and advised that they have a system that was needed that they were doing around neurodiversity work.

Councillor Scurfield commented that she was pleased to see that NHS dentistry was a priority as it was becoming a national crisis and asked if the early years group were aware of the state of oral health and what was the group doing to address these issues. She also asked if the groups were looking at children's readiness for school.

The Commissioning Manager responded that readiness for school had not been identified as an issue, but she could suggest this to the partnership. With regard to dentistry a colleague had provided some information that dental commissioning had moved from NHS England into the North East and North Cumbria ICB in July which gave more control going forward. A number of actions had been implemented including additional funding to extend practice opening hours for emergency care and to improve one to one triage and out of hours treatment. There had also provided a lot of support to practices to recruit overseas dentists and an incentive payment to target areas where it had been difficult to recruit. Three dentists had been secured through this scheme over the last couple of years. There had been a service redesign and dental therapists could now undertake fillings, they were awaiting a national dental recovery plan and the NHS workforce plan that came out last week included dentistry based upon increasing the number of apprenticeships and expanding the training and have a tie in period after qualification.

Councillor Scurfield asked what the groups know of the impact of the current situation on children's oral health.

The Commissioning Manager indicated that the partnership did have a discussion around this and have the oral health strategy partnership and part of that discussion was around water fluoridation but was a national question and not for the public health team anymore.

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

## **8 Performance Management Quarter 4 2022/23**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided an overview of progress towards achieving the key outcomes of the council's corporate performance framework and highlight key messages to inform strategic priorities and work programmes. The report covered performance in and to the end of quarter four, 2022/23, January to March 2023 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager was in attendance to present the report.

Mrs Gunn referred to the statistics for Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) that had dropped off the report and asked why this was the case.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that the global EHCP in place was a headline indicator and is in relation to the level of demand. He indicated that Durham had the graduated approach and provided more support through top up funding to schools which should result in a lower level of EHCP as they were providing earlier help in schools. Monitoring the overall number gave an indicator of the wider system pressures. They had a number of processing indicators around every service in the Council and escalate the issues through different levels of process and Members may only see certain indicators, but they did have a lot of statistics for every service. He commented that there were some challenges in the EHCP processes that was largely due to high demand.

Mrs Gunn clarified that ideally EHCP should be going down but the number of SEN plans going up and indicated that it was important that the percentages and targets were shared with the committee.

Councillor Crute referred to EHCP and indicated that the report stated that the rise in request for assessments was impacting on the ability to carry them out in the statutory time scales. However, the performance indicator tracker suggested that the number of children on a EHCP was on an upward trend and had been for the last four quarters. He asked if the failure to carry out those initial assessments in time was impacting on figures.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that the number of EHCP assessments was going up, it was not necessarily a performance target but was getting better. He stated that the global number of EHCP were across all age groups up to the age of 25, so you have a moving target with plans being issued all the time. The number of plans being worked on was getting bigger and more requests were coming in, there more open assessments being worked on in the service which would have normally been processed and included another indicator.

Councillor Crute indicated that the future impact of these assessment was a concern.

Councillor Waldock asked if those who were applying for an assessment were aware that the council were not meeting the 20-week deadline. The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that he would take this back to the service and feed this back to the committee.

Councillor Waldock asked of the 197 who were over the 20 weeks, how far over were they and how near were they to completion.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager responded that it was a range but he did not have the figures to hand but the issue was that it was taking longer due to the increasing number of caseloads. They had a small number of cases where it was taking a long time since the request had been received but was due to the case complexities. These were relatively small numbers and was less than 10.

Councillor Waldock asked how the authority compared to other local authorities and whether they had they seen an increase in demand and were not hitting the 20-week target also.



The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager responded that historically they had performed well in this indicator and the last couple of years had seen a dramatic decline. The last published figure was 27%, the previous year was 4% that were within the 20 weeks. He commented that the national average was 40% but largely there were a number of local authorities with a relatively low performance for the 20 weeks, but others performed very well.

Councillor Waldock asked if the council could have conversations with those authorities that were doing well and commented that she knew it may be a demand issue.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that those conversations were ongoing and stated that there was a regional network and the benchmarking data had indicated an increase in requests of around 4% but the increase in Durham was above this.

Councillor Deinali referred to EHCP and asked if any analysis had been carried out to look at any correlation between factors that could impact on children's needs and the increase in EHCP. She continued if any work had been carried out to address early support from centres and their locations and any support given to schools due to the increase in workloads from the demand of the EHCP and what support was available for families who were waiting for an assessment.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that he would pass this onto the relevant service for a response.

Councillor Mulholland referred to case load pressures and that it was reported that two thirds of social workers leave to due to the impact of the workload and asked what support was provided to alleviate these pressures.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager responded that he would take this back to the service for a response.

In response to a question from Mrs Gunn, the Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager indicated that they provide some indicators as an exception when a one-off topic was been considered, the report was to flag up certain issues not necessarily every one.

Councillor Deinali asked for a more detailed report specifically around EHCP to this committee so that it can be discussed in more details.

Councillor Crute suggested that this could be raised as an item for the work programme.

**Resolved:** That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance, the continuing impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and 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 and other external factors be noted.

## **9 Refresh of the Work Programme 2023/2024**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Resources that provided Members with an updated work programme for 2023/24 (for copy of report see file of minutes).

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer was in attendance to present the report and advised Members that he had received notification from Ms Evans, Co-opted Member who had identified three areas of work for additional consideration. The first was early intervention in young people's mental health. He advised that the service had indicated that this would be included as part of the Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience item to be considered at the 26 April 2024 meeting and was discussed at the iThrive workshop in May earlier this year. The second item was universal youth work and the service had confirmed that this was provided by colleagues in the voluntary and community service and suggest a briefing paper to members for circulation. The third item was around pastoral care in schools. The service had advised that this was an individualised service for each educational establishment so was not something that the local authority had any control, influence or oversight in the ability to look at this was therefore severely restricted.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer referred to the conversations today around EHCP and the desire of members to get a lot more detail and an item included in the work programme. If members were minded to include this, he was happy to take that forward as an addition to the work programme but indicated that this may already be included as part of a topic already identified in the programme and would advise members if this was the case.

Councillor Crute indicated that he was happy to take the advice of the Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer with regard to the capacity of the Committee to take on the workload as presented. He continued that they needed to look closely at EHCP as there was an upward trend of delay where they could not meet the 20-week deadline for an initial assessment.

In response to a question from Mrs Gunn on the support offered to Educational Psychologists, the Chair responded that the iThrive workshop contained a lot of helpful information around this area.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer indicated that the Council have a corporate basket of indicators that are routinely reported but where they want to look at specific areas of activity and issues, they receive more detail from the service. He indicated that wherever possible when they do bring specific services areas to committee for consideration, they would look to ensure that they have appropriate performance information and data included within those updates.

Councillor Crute indicated that the performance indicators were moving all the time and the data could be deceptive and asked if there could be a review of the performance indicators.

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer responded that the Quarter 4 Performance Report was the last version in the current format due to some changes to the corporate performance reporting framework.

The Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager advised that the format of the performance report would be changing in accordance with the structure contained in the Council Plan.

In response to questions on the process of changing the performance indicators reporting structure the Corporate Equality and Strategy Manager explained the process.

The Chair indicated that the process included the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**Resolved:** (i) That the work programme for 2023/2024 be agreed.

(ii) That clarification be sought on the Educational Healthcare Plans and if not already featured in the issues already identified it be included in the work programme.

This page is intentionally left blank

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

**22 September 2023**

**Child Poverty in County Durham**




---

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

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The report accompanies a presentation to Durham County Council's Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny members on the progress of the Child Poverty Working Group (CPWG) in addressing and mitigating the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham since the last update in October 2022.

**Executive summary**

- 2 Poverty can affect every area of a child's development: social, educational, health and personal. Living in a poor household can reduce children's expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. As adults, they are more likely to suffer ill health, be unemployed or homeless, and become involved in offending, drug and alcohol abuse and abusive relationships.
- 3 County Durham continues to experience higher levels of child poverty than those seen across England with an estimated 24.5% of children under the age of 16 living in relative poverty in the year 2021/22 and 23.6% for children aged 0-19 years. Data from the School Census on pupils living in and attending school in County Durham, since Spring 2020, has shown the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has increased by 29%, rising to over 22,200 eligible pupils. We also know approximately 24% of families eligible for free school meals (FSM) do not take up the offer.
- 4 The County Durham Child Poverty Working Group under the guidance of the Poverty Action Steering Group has continued to be proactive and responsive to the impact of poverty and the additional burden presented by the current cost of living crisis. This has involved the proactive development and implementation of a range of support for children and families including

the promotion of the Healthy Start Scheme and Free School Meals(FSM), the continual development of the County Durham Fun and Food programme, promoting access to financial help and support via our Family Hubs and the forthcoming launch of the Start for Life fund.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 5 Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:
  - (a) note the contents of the report; and
  - (b) provide comment to inform future priorities.

### **Background**

- 6 Poverty can affect every area of a child’s development: social, educational, health and personal. Living in a poor household can reduce children’s expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. As adults, they are more likely to suffer ill health, be unemployed or homeless, and become involved in offending, drug and alcohol abuse and abusive relationships.
- 7 It is estimated that approximately 4.5 million children live in poverty in the UK in 2021/22, and poverty rates are highest amongst families with children. That’s 29 per cent of children, or nine in a classroom of 30. 44% of children living in lone-parent families are in poverty. Lone parents face a higher risk of poverty due to the lack of an additional earner, low rates of maintenance payments, gender inequality in employment and pay, and childcare costs.
- 8 Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. 71% of children growing up in poverty live in a household where at least one person works.
- 9 Children in larger families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty – 42 per cent of children living in families with 3 or more children live in poverty.
- 10 A recent report by the North East Child Poverty Commission: [‘Getting the building blocks wrong: Early childhood poverty in the North East’](#). highlights almost two in five children in the Northeast (38%) are living in poverty. This rises to almost half – 47% – of Northeast children living in a household with an under 5. The report also highlights the northeast is experiencing a much steeper increase in ‘in-work’ child poverty than that seen across the UK.

### **Child Poverty Working Group**

- 11 The multi-agency Child Poverty Working Group recognises the need to coordinate a multi-agency strategic approach to address the causes of and impact of poverty on children, young people and families living in County Durham. The working group have agreed to use the Joseph Rowntree Foundation definition of poverty: ***‘When a person’s resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society’***.

The group agreed this definition describes not only monetary and resource poverty but also poverty of opportunity.

- 12 The CPWG has developed a plan on a page (see Appendix 2) to prioritise actions to mitigate the impact of poverty on children and families across County Durham. The aim of the plan is: *to use all available resources to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham.*
- 13 The plan focusses on four key priorities which are:
  - (a) to understand the current level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources;
  - (b) to support all those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham to have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity;
  - (c) promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive and raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.
  - (d) raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.

**Priority 1: To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources.**

### **County Durham Child Poverty data and intelligence**

- 14 The percentage of children living in relative poverty (aged 0-19) 2021/22 in County Durham is 23.6% compared to 24.7% in the Northeast and 19.3% in England.
- 15 Data from the Spring School Census (2023) on pupils living in and attending school in County Durham, shows Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility in County Durham is at 30.9% (22,200 pupils) which is an increase of 29%, compared with 23.9% (17,200 pupils) in the Spring 2020 census, an increase of 5,000 pupils. We also know approximately 24% of families eligible for FSM do not take up the offer.
- 16 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data which is now readily available on Durham Insights. (Please see **Appendix 3** for detailed child poverty data and intelligence in County Durham). <https://www.durhaminsight.info/children-in-poverty/>

- 17 It is clear from the data and intelligence collated on child poverty in County Durham that more children are living in poverty than in previous years. Over one quarter of children aged between 0-4 years live in households deemed in relative poverty. Steep increases in the percentage of children of school age living in poverty is also seen across County Durham. Localities such as Peterlee, Easington, Woodhouse Close, Shildon and Newton Aycliffe West consistently have high levels of child poverty. It is also evident children with Special Needs and /or Disability (SEND) are overrepresented in child poverty measures.

**Priority 2: All those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity.**

### **Training for frontline staff**

- 18 A Financial Ability Training programme has been developed for all frontline practitioners including Social Workers and One Point staff and key partners. The training, delivered by DCC's Financial Ability team, helps equip frontline staff to discuss family finances, effective budgeting, as well as provide access to range of help and support available to families. To date in 23/24, 6 sessions have been delivered to over 100 members of staff.

### **Advice in County Durham Portal**

- 19 The Advice in County Durham (AiCD) portal provides a quick and simple referral pathway to a broad range of support services for families including benefit and debt advice. All One Point Service practitioners have been trained and registered to use the Advice in County Durham (AiCD) portal. Further roll out across the wider partnership is in the planning phase.

### **Help and support available for families**

- 20 A dedicated web page [Help with your money](#) has been developed for County Durham residents and provides specific help and guidance to families with children. The page has information on a range of support available including applying for Healthy Start (HS), applying for Free School Meals (FSM), debt advice/financial help and help with heating and fuel bills. As part of our Family Hub and Start for Life programme links to this page and promotion of HS is outlined in our Start for Life leaflet and website shared with every prospective or new parent. Please see Appendix 4 for leaflets.

### **Healthy Start Scheme**

- 21 The Healthy Start steering group is working hard to promote and increase the uptake of Healthy Start across the county. Partnership working ensures that Healthy Start is embedded in all agendas, such as the healthy weight and oral health strategies.
- 22 This 'whole system' approach ensures that all service providers have a responsibility for directing families to support. This includes maternity



services and health visiting, to ensure that meaningful conversations with families take place from the earliest opportunity.

- 23 A local Healthy Start leaflet has been developed and distributed through the family hubs and wider partners, recognising that some vulnerable families do not have access to information online. The leaflet was co-produced with families, and it includes local contact details for wider financial advice and support.
- 24 The current uptake of the Healthy Start scheme for those eligible families is currently 75% which is one of the highest uptake rates in England, but we are still working hard to increase this as we are mindful that approximately 1400 families who are eligible for this additional fund are not claiming.

### **Free School Meals**

- 25 The main objective of free school meals is to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are provided with healthy, nutritious food to support their physical, psychological and educational development.
- 26 Eligibility for free school meals increased across the county between 2015/16 and 2021/22 and pushed the total to 22,000 eligible pupils, however, we also know about 24% of eligible children do not take up the offer. This remains a key priority for the Child Poverty Working Group for 2023/24.
- 27 In support of reducing stigma, County Durham schools all utilise a biometric system, which aim to reduce inequality and stigma. However, in a report: *Pioneering new approaches to children's food budgets* (Defreyer et al 2020) it reported that there were unexpected social inequalities built into the system which meant that pupils in receipt of free school meals are not able to carry forward any unspent allowance. A school in Darlington, made a small change to their biometric system, at a minimal cost of £250 which then enabled the pupils to roll over unspent money. During the first year of operation, free school meal pupils spent an additional £17,000 on school food (this amount would be considerably more for a school with very high levels of pupil premium eligibility). Students are able to manage their own meal allowances and have greater spending power to access food at any time of the day, including breakfast and after school. This roll over is capped to each half term period.
- 28 As part of this work the County Durham Youth Council undertook some peer research to help the group better understand the barriers to taking up the offer of FSM and make recommendations for possible solutions. A total of 79 young people took part in the research. The report highlighted ongoing stigma, a lack of time to get served as well as socialise with friends or attend revision sessions and issues relating to parental awareness of eligibility. *Their report concluded: Every child and young person, regardless of their 'entitlement', or 'background', or 'home situations', deserves a good*

*meal, and currently, we're just not getting it.* The report provided a number of suggested solutions which the Child Poverty Working Group will take forward. The report has been shared with the chair of the Durham Association of Secondary Head Teachers and with DCC Head of Education.

- 29 In addition, the Child Poverty Working Group have become involved in a national project to consider and develop approaches to auto enrolment of FSM. Auto enrolment was piloted in Sheffield last year but had some data sharing issues. DWP and DfE are now supporting all LA in the next pilot phase to overcome this barrier. DfE are working with Feeding Britain to work with LAs to explore further options in support of auto enrolment for FSM.
- 30 Due to different LA and schools having a range of approaches to providing access to FSM there is no one way which would support this development. A number of LAs are developing a range of approaches including:
- (a) changes to schools' admission form to include request for parents' national insurance number where eligibility could be checked.
  - (b) Other LA are taking an approach which utilises requests for eg Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit
- 31 Further work with key DCC officers is underway to explore which potential route may work best in support of this auto enrolment approach.

### **Cutting the Cost of the School and Pre School-Day**

- 32 The need to address poverty within education settings is a priority. Evidence suggests the cost of the school and preschool day to be significant on low-income families and has the potential to negatively impact on educational opportunities and outcomes. The Child Poverty Working Group aims to support all schools, nurseries and colleges to mitigate the negative impact of poverty on children and has developed a range of cutting cost of the school/pre-school day initiatives.
- 33 The 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' (CCSD) was developed and introduced in 2019. The associated training aimed to support educational settings to gain a deeper insight into the scale and impact of poverty on children and young people, to challenge the stigma associated with living in poverty and support settings to develop practical steps in which to cut the cost of the school day.
- 34 Prior to Covid 106 schools/nurseries have undertaken the training programme. 97% of participants reported that the training offered them the opportunity to learn something new with qualitative feedback highlighting the importance of spending time reflecting on poverty from an educational perspective. Due to the impact of Covid, the CCSD has not been delivered to schools between 2020 and 2022. This, however provided an opportunity to revise the programme and also develop a bespoke programme for nursery

schools. The Thrive model has been applied to this work, ensuring all schools, nurseries and colleges get a range of resources and information to help them consider the impact of poverty for their pupils. The revised training programme has been delivered to 16 schools (9 primary, 6 secondary and 1 special school) and 5 early years settings, further sessions are planned as part of the education development plan. See Appendix 5.

## Support to pay for school uniforms

- 35 The Department for Education has published new statutory guidance for schools which seeks to make school uniform more affordable for families. The guidance includes measures on second-hand uniforms, schools' arrangements with suppliers, and ensuring parents have access to clear information about uniform policies. The Children's Society in collaboration with Child Poverty Action Group has developed guidance for schools to help [Affordable School Uniforms: A Guide](#). A dedicated web page has been developed for families to find out about this support [Help with buying items for school - Durham County Council](#). Families who are in receipt of child benefit and require help with buying items for school can also apply for a NE First Credit Union Family Loan. This can provide a parent with a loan of up to £500 without having a credit check. A Family Loan allows families to access a cash loan up front to purchase the required items as well as giving the option to save each month for the future. In a partnership agreement between Durham County Council and NE First Credit Union, an interest free loan of up to £450 plus £50 savings deposit is being offered to qualifying residents. CYPs practitioners are able to refer families who they feel might meet the requirements for the loan. With a sharp rise in applications to high interest lenders expected in the coming months, with rates as high as 2000% APR, this loan can offer a significant lifeline for anyone who needs emergency money.
- 36 The County Durham Youth Council have developed an Affordable Uniform Pledge and have asked schools to sign up to the pledge. To date 41 number of schools have signed the pledge. A relaunch is planned for the new school term.

## Period Products Scheme

- 37 The [Period Poverty scheme](#) has been further extended into the academic year 2023/24 and is available to all state maintained schools and 16 to 19 education establishments in England. It provides anyone who has periods access to tampons, pads and more through their school or college if, for example, they can not afford period products, have forgotten to bring them to school or college or have come on their period unexpectedly. Further information and guidance is available [Period products in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) A communication to schools took place in September 2022 and will be re promoted at the start of the Autumn term 2023 to ensure all schools have access to this offer.

## Additional access to financial support for families

### Household Support Fund

- 38 The Household Support Fund has continued to provide vulnerable families with additional help and support. During 2022/23 the Household Support Fund provided households with children in receipt of FSM with food vouchers during summer and winter school holidays, 69,072 vouchers were issued, equating to £3.9 million expenditure. A discretionary school support fund of £115,700 was established providing essential school items, individual payments to Care Leavers (£100) and to Kinship Carers (£100) as well as 1,400 Christmas Hampers were distributed.
- 39 Children and Young People's Service have been allocated a total of £5,600,000 for the 12-month period, April 2023 to March 2024. The majority of the allocation will be in the form of food vouchers which will be sent to schools (including Early Years providers) for distribution to households where there is a child eligible for free school meals in two payments over the year. Based on current information, awaiting final confirmation, we anticipate just over 30,000 awards will be made supporting over 17,000 families. The value of each voucher will be £75, meaning a total award of £150 per eligible pupil across the two payments.
- 40 In addition, support amounting to the single sum of £100 will be available to each kinship carer household. This support will be available on direct application and subject to necessary checks.
- 41 A sum to cover a single payment of £100 to each care leaver will be transferred from the total allocation to the team supporting work with care leavers, for distribution via their established channels.
- 42 'School Support Fund' payments will again be made to schools to enable them to provide discretionary support beyond the voucher support for such things as:
- (a) essential school uniform and equipment including stationery, school bags;
  - (b) winter clothing (including coats, hats, gloves, underwear /socks;
  - (c) footwear;
  - (d) PE kit;
  - (e) essential household items including white goods;
  - (f) other essential items (including clothing, bedding, personal hygiene and cleaning products).
- 43 This 'School Support fund' can support **any** family the school/college have identified are facing financial difficulty (this includes children not eligible for

Early Years Pupil Premium or FSM). This funding can be used to support pre-school and 6<sup>th</sup> form provision attached to a school.

- 44 A total sum of £195k has been secured by the Best Start in Life Steering Group to provide safer sleeping resources in the home (depending on family need this may include cot/ Moses basket/bed/mattress/bedding/sheets/cellular blankets). The funding can also be used for safety gates, fireguards, home safety packs (door latches, corner cushions), bath & room thermometer packs, blind cleats bed guards. This fund will be administered by the Social Inclusion Team.
- 45 In addition, £81,000 has been allocated for the provision of Christmas food hampers. Working together with Northeast charity Feeding families, Children's Services and 0-19 health professionals will identify families most in need to benefit from these hampers. The funding covers the costs associated of the provision of 2,000 hampers.

### **Stronger Families Grant and Greggs Foundation Trust Fund**

- 46 The Stronger Families Grant (£50,000 p.a.) and Greggs Foundation Trust contribution (£13,500 p.a.) continues to be utilised by frontline practitioners in Children and Young People Services and the wider County Durham Partnership. In the financial year 2022/23 approximately £45,000 250 awards were made to families including disposal of bulky waste, skip hire, home safety equipment, household furniture such as beds and carpets. Ongoing Service Level Agreements are in place with East Durham Partnership and County Durham Furniture Help Scheme to provide furniture and white goods, ensuing local community provides are also supported.

### **Feeding Families Food Parcels and Hygiene Packs**

- 47 In partnership with the Northeast charity Feeding Families and the Rotary Club, approximately 20 food parcels are delivered fortnightly across the county. Demand for these continue to be high and are accessed by frontline practitioners supporting those most in need. The partnership recently extended their offer and we have now arranged for hygiene packs to be delivered to the Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation Team. Packs include a range of personal hygiene products and will be specifically made up for teenage males and teenage females.

### **Reducing Food Waste -The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT)**

- 48 TBBT is an affordable food club, with hubs across County Durham. Members of TBBT pay £8.50 for approximately £35 worth of food including fruit and vegetables, chilled goods and cupboard staples such as pasta and cereal. The food comes from supermarket surplus, food factories and farms. This means contents vary from day to day depending on what is available. Most members feel that they save around £25 a week and just 'top up' from the supermarket when they have seen what is in the TBBT bags each week. Members do not have to come every week. They will

receive a text from TBBT each week, and if they do not want to access the provision that week they can easily opt out.

- 49 A month long campaign in all TBBT Hubs by Citizen Advice is starting in September has been agreed to promote FSM and Healthy Start uptake and help parents apply.
- 50 County Durham currently has 15 TBBT hubs at Annfield Plain, Bishop Auckland, Bowburn, Bullion, Cornforth, Crook, Dawdon, Eden Hill, Haswell, Leadgate, Spennymoor, Stanley, Ushaw Moor, Tow Law and Wheatley Hill.  
<http://www.breadandbutterthing.org/members>

**Priority 3: Promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive.**

### **DfE Holiday Activities with Food Programme 2022 - Fun and Food**

- 51 The Department for Education (DfE) provided all Local Authorities with funding to provide free holiday activities and healthy food for children that are eligible for benefits related free school meals during Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2022. Durham was allocated £2.3 million to provide free 'holiday clubs' and committed offering all eligible and other vulnerable children access to a range of enriching activities with healthy food. The aim of the programme is for children who attend provision to:
- (a) eat more healthily over the school holidays;
  - (b) be more active during the school holidays;
  - (c) take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well-being along with their wider education attainment;
  - (d) be safe and not to be socially isolated;
  - (e) have greater knowledge of health nutrition;
  - (f) be more engaged with school and other local services and children and families develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and are effectively signposted towards other information and support for example health, employment and education.
- 52 Recognising the need and demand for holiday activities with healthy food remains during half term holidays an additional £80,00 from Public Health for February half term 2022 and £150,000 was secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG) for May and October half terms 2022.
- 53 Holiday Activities with Healthy Food has been branded as 'Fun and Food' in County Durham. A dedicated webpage is now available for families and

providers [www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood](http://www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood) and also a Facebook Group [Fun and Food County Durham | Facebook](#)

- 54 A central coordination team lead on the programme and have developed a partnership delivery model. Funding was allocated to a range of partners including Voluntary and Community, private providers, schools, 0-19 family hubs, leisure services, secure children's home and libraries.
- 55 Throughout 2022 a total of 46,000 children and young people engaged in Fun and Food provision (all main holidays and half term holidays).
- 56 Partners delivering projects have been particularly creative and all activities were delivered face to face and included arts and crafts, environmental and wildlife activities, STEM activities and sports & physical activity, yoga and wellbeing. Healthy meals and snacks were provided with each activity.
- 57 In recognition of lower numbers of older young people attending previous Fun and Food provision, a development worker role has been appointed to work with stakeholders and partners across the County to scope and develop an integrated, county wide, community based, physical activity programme targeting 11–16-year-old children and their families.
- 58 The programme has begun to look to expand specialist provision for children and young people with SEND and will work with universal providers to ensure that provision is accessible for all children and young people. Specific branding for these two offers has been developed. See appendix 6.
- 59 Additional support was available in Summer 2023 working together with Northeast First Credit Union to attend Fun and Food activities and enable families to maximise income and encourage responsible borrowing and savings. Feedback on uptake is not as yet available.
- 60 Durham have been allocated £2.3 million for Holiday Activities with Healthy Food for the holiday periods Easter, Summer and Christmas 2023. In addition to this the Poverty Action Steering group allocated £425,000 for half term holidays February 2023 – February 2024 to ensure there is a consistent offer.

## **Education Fun Fund**

- 61 The Children in Care Council (run with Investing in Children) exists to give children in care and care-leavers a voice and help them to have a say in the way their care service is run. All children and young people that are looked after in County Durham are automatically members of the CICC (Children in Care Council) and can take part in discussions and issues raised. In April 2021 Durham Children in Care Council (CICC) established the Education Fun Fund (EFF). The project evolved when CICC members identified that young people should be more involved in shaping how the Pupil Premium Fund supports their education.

- 62 Durham County Council's Virtual Headteacher allocated £5,000 for CICC to develop a project so that young people can be supported to apply for up to £150 towards something that is educational and beneficial to them but also includes fun and enriching activities.
- 63 The members of CICC together with Investing in Children were successful in gaining £15,000 funding from the Poverty Action Steering Group to further develop the EFF and are now able to support young people that are not care experienced. This includes vulnerable young people that are supported by a Social Worker, enabling vulnerable young people to take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience and well-being along with their wider education attainment. As of May 2023, 30 applications have been approved. Each applicant is unique and individual. Some examples of successful applications have been:
- (a) Money towards a piano and lessons.
  - (b) Sensory equipment.
  - (c) Experiences and days out e.g., a summer football camp, a trip to a castle, an aeroplane simulator.
  - (d) Uniform and equipment for sports and activities e.g., martial arts, duke of Edinburgh.
  - (e) Materials, books and programmes e.g., art supplies, studying materials and other educational items for school, college or hobbies.

### **Improving access to Leisure Centres**

- 64 Culture, Sport and Tourism Service (CST) have continued the good partnership work with the 'Fun and Food' programme from previous years and carried forward into 2023. Access to free holiday and weekend inflatable and swimming sessions has been extremely popular, with the service continuing to provide free weekend swim sessions and Splashability sessions for children with SEND, with **1067** free swims from April – June. Weekend free swimming sessions continue this financial year, free swimming during the April, May and Summer holiday periods funded by Fun and Food has had to date had **20,666**. Fun and Food has also provided water fountains in all pool sites and given out thousands of free water bottles to children attending free swimming, as well as continuing to provide healthy snacks.
- 65 In partnership with Fun and Food, the service is providing free gym memberships to targeted young people over the age of 11 with **92** memberships provided to date working with a broad range of partners such as Young Carers. 0-25 Community Family Health Service and CAMHS.



- 66 CST has also developed a physical activity framework which will ensure that the service has a more targeted approach to support health inequalities and to address the barriers to children and families accessing sport and leisure facilities, which includes affordability, this links into the recently approved physical activity strategy led by Public Health.

### **Family Hubs in County Durham**

- 67 As reported in the Cabinet Report December 2022, Durham is one of 75 areas who have received additional funding to develop its Family Hub and Start for Life (SfL) offer. Durham will receive around £4.4 million funding over the three-year programme (22-25). The Family Hub and Start for Life programme is designed to provide 'one stop shop' access to family support, when it is needed – from pregnancy, through the child's youngest years and later childhood, and into adolescence until they reach the age of 24 and will aim to ensure that all families have access to the same high-quality services and supportive relationships within their local area.
- 68 As part of the government's expectation guidance on Family Hubs, access to debt and welfare support is a key expectation and including all Family Hub practitioners being able to
- (a) provide guidance about financial support available and can connect to further support if required including VCS organisations such as Money Helper, Step Change, Citizens Advice, Christians Against Poverty and provide access to virtual services including a online information webpage.
- 69 Additional to the above expectations parents and carers have access to the following via their local Family Hub
- (a) pre-loved clothes including winter coats and shoes, school uniforms, baby clothes and equipment.
  - (b) a community pantry with non-perishable foods.
  - (c) signpost to Community Fridges and Food Banks.
  - (d) access to Christmas Food Hampers.
  - (e) personal hygiene packs.
  - (f) access to Citizen Advice and Credit Union support, budgeting training programmes/cooking on a budget course.
  - (g) Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programmes.
  - (h) Young Parents Programme access to credit union and incentive to save scheme.

#### **Priority 4: Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.**

- 70 The latest verified data (June 2023) shows that the proportion of young people aged 16-17 who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in County Durham is 5.6%, compared to an average rate of 5.4% for the North East and an average rate of 3.2% for England.
- 71 The proportion of young people in County Durham whose destination is 'Not Known' is 0.5%, compared to an average rate of 0.7% for the North East and an average rate of 1.8% for England. It is worth noting that the combined rate of young people who are NEET / Not Known in County Durham is lower compared to the same period in 2019 – 6.2% (June 2023) compared to 7.0% (June 2019). The number of 16-17 years olds who are NEET in County Durham is 636 and the number whose destination is Not Known is 61. The overall number of 16-17 year olds in County Durham is 11,323.
- 72 A range of support is provided to young people to raise their aspirations and resilience as they prepare to progress into further education, employment, or training. This includes the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools, the Workplaces Project, as well as DurhamWorks Programmes for young people aged 16-24.
- 73 DurhamWorks Programme for Schools supports young people in Years 10 and 11, who are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET, to make a successful transition into post-16 education, employment or training. The Programme is delivered in secondary schools, special schools, and alternative education provision. Young people receive a combination of careers guidance, one-to-one mentoring support, as well as the opportunity to participate in a range of activities that are focused on transition support, improving motivation, and Work Related Learning and Enterprise. Delivery of these activities are supported by Business Ambassadors, who are volunteers from local businesses and organisations.
- 74 The Workplaces Project provides opportunities for young people in Years 10 and 12, to gain a valuable insight into the world of work and find out about the skills and aptitudes that employers value through bespoke visits to workplaces. They learn about specific employment sectors, different job roles within those sectors, as well as recruitment processes. They also spend time with employees to find out about their pathways into work, in order to show them that employment is an achievable goal. The Workplaces Project supports young people identified as being at risk of becoming NEET and who may lack confidence and / or support from their immediate family to progress into work in future. The Workplaces Project is delivered in secondary schools, special schools, as well as alternative education provision, and it dovetails with the DurhamWorks Programme for Schools.
- 75 Young people who do not make a successful progression into post-16 learning receive support through DurhamWorks, DurhamWorks 3 and

DurhamWorks Futures. DurhamWorks supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET, including one-to-one transition support, the opportunity to obtain English and maths qualifications, as well access to a range of learning provision to support their progression into education, employment and training.

- 76 DurhamWorks 3 supports young people aged 16-24 who are NEET, with a specific emphasis on supporting young people identified as vulnerable, including young people who have SEND, young people who are Looked After / Care Leavers, young parents, young people who are offenders / at risk of offending, young carers, as well as young people who have mental health issues. DurhamWorks 3 is focused on securing employment outcomes for young people within a defined timeframe. Therefore, employer engagement activity is a key feature of the programme.
- 77 DurhamWorks Futures is a programme for young people aged 16-24 who are NEET and are within an identified vulnerable group, including those who have previously received a Social Care intervention, those identified as SEN Support in school, those who have previously been excluded from education, and those who have previously attended alternative education. There is a focus on providing young people with intensive support, to develop their motivation, confidence and work ready skills.

## **Future Developments**

### **Financial Inclusion in Education Settings**

- 78 Funding has been secured from the Poverty Action Steering Group and the One Point Service for a 12-month pilot of the Financial Inclusion Support Officer (FISO) programme in County Durham and the creation of three full time posts to deliver the programme across 9 secondary schools (3 schools per FISO post). Schools will be identified using child poverty related data and intelligence on Durham Insights along with co-production with education leaders and head teachers who are already very engaged with issues related to child poverty.
- 79 The FISO programme actively explores new ways to tackle child poverty and overcome the current challenges related to the cost-of-living crisis. It focuses on maximising entitlement to generate income from social security benefits and on supporting parents/carers to pursue pathways into employment. It also supports families by providing advice on support available for children such as free school meals, clothing grants etc.
- 80 The FISO programme will support the further development of Durham's Cutting the Cost of the School/Preschool Day. A key element to this will be co-production with children, young people and parents/carers to ensure that the cutting the cost programme is meeting the needs of the school community at a local level including developing tools and resources to help support families and also a workforce development programme to raise

awareness with all school staff about the issues faced by families living in poverty and those affected by the cost of living crisis.

- 81 The service is education-centred with experienced financial inclusion support officers being embedded in schools as personal, named contacts for parents/carers to support them in identifying and making sense of the benefits they qualify for, navigating the application processes and identifying and accessing any other forms of support that may be available to them e.g. Early Help services, holiday activities with food programme support or numeracy support through the Multiply (DurhamWorks) programme.

## **Conclusion**

- 82 Poverty continues to be a key concern for children and families living in County Durham. We understand the negative impact living in poverty has on a child's life chances. Current data and intelligence tell us in all measures of poverty are increasing for children and young people living in our county. The current cost of living crisis is exacerbating the financial pressure on many families. The CPWG is committed to developing and implementing a range of programmes and initiatives to help mitigate the negative impacts of poverty on the everyday experiences of children and young people in our county. Ongoing support and oversight from elected members are welcomed.
- 83 A Briefing note will be shared with Council Members in September outlining all financial support available to families across County Durham.

## **Background papers**

- None.

## **Other useful documents**

- None.

## **Author(s)**

Karen Davison

Tel: 03000 268904

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 placed a duty on government to report on child poverty. The Act, however, repealed parts of the Child Poverty Act 2010, including the duty placed on local authorities to prepare and publish an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in their area.

### **Finance**

Probity of DfE Holiday Activities with Food Funding, Household Support Fund.

### **Consultation**

Consultation with children and families will take place in developing Holiday Activities with Healthy Food programme.

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

Equality of opportunity for children and families most at risk of negative impact of poverty.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Human Rights**

Equal opportunities.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Research shows families living in poverty are more likely to be involved or victims of crime and anti-social behaviours.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Procurement:**

None.

---

## **Appendix 2: Child Poverty Plan on a Page**

---

Attached as separate document.

---

## Appendix 3: Child Poverty data and intelligence September 2023

---

- 1 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team have developed detailed child poverty data which is now readily available on Durham Insights.  
<https://www.durhaminsight.info/children-in-poverty/>
  - (a) **Relative Poverty:** In the financial year 2021/22 an estimated 24.5% of children under the age of 16 were living in relative poverty in County Durham. Across the Northeast the figure was slightly higher at 25.2% while nationally (England) the figure was 19.2%. For County Durham this is an increase from 17.5% in 2015/16, with the number of children in living in relative poverty rising from an estimated 15,500 (children under 16) to 22,300.
    - (i) An estimated 27.1% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in relative poverty – an increase of 13% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16;
    - (ii) The number of children aged 5 to 10 increased during this period, rising by 45% to 22.7% of children aged 5 to 10;
    - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 57%, rising to 24.4% of children aged 11 to 15;
    - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 18.8%, rising to 20.4% of children aged 16 to 19 living in relative poverty.
  - (b) **Absolute Poverty:** In the financial year 2021/22 an estimated 20.2% of children under the age of 16 were living in absolute poverty in County Durham. Across the Northeast the figure was slightly higher at 20.8% while nationally (England) the figure was 14.7%. For County Durham this is an increase from 17.2% in 2015/16, with the number of children living in absolute poverty rising from an estimated 15,300 (aged children under 16) to 18,100.
    - (i) an estimated 22.7% of children aged 0 to 4 were living in absolute poverty – an increase of 1.3% in the number of children aged 0 to 4 since 2015/16;
    - (ii) The 5 to 10 age group increased during this period, rising by 26% to 18.3% of children aged 5 to 10;
    - (iii) The 11 to 15 age group increased the most, increasing by 40%, rising to 20.3% of children aged 11 to 15;
    - (iv) The 16 to 19 age group increased by 5.8%; this meant a rise from 15.2% to 17.5% of 16 to 19's living in absolute poverty.

- (c) **Free School Meals:** Between 2015/16 and 2021/22, figures released by DfE estimated the number of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 43.9% rising to over 19,400 eligible pupils, while the number of pupils on roll increased by 2%. Across England the of number pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals increased by 43.1%, rising to 19.7% with the number of pupils on roll increasing by 4%. As table 1 highlights across County Durham, the proportion of children and young people eligible for FSM has increased over the last five years – however, the increase is greater than the England average. In terms of claiming, the percentage has also increased – however the increase is less than the England average.

		<b>18/19</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>change</b>
Durham	Eligible	21%	31%	+10pp
	claiming	15%	23%	+8pp
England average	Eligible	17%	23%	+6pp
	claiming	12%	19%	+7pp

**Table 1:** FSM

- 2 The rise in FSM is due to a combination of Universal Credit roll-out (and associated protections) and the cost-of-living crisis. In the Spring census, schools fill in a box saying how many of their FSM children had a meal on that day. It is only at school level, though, not person level. So the statement that it relates to 24% of *families* might not be entirely accurate – it could be that one child in a family took their meal and another child did not. The 76% figure is an internal calculation from Durham’s maintained schools (so it covers people in our schools, not children living in Durham. We lose pupils over the borders, most notably to Gateshead and Sunderland.)
- 3 The DfE published their calculations, and they make it 75% take up for both maintained schools and academies in Durham.
- 4 The Research & Public Health Intelligence Team has disaggregated FSM eligibility data from the school census to local areas to produce a local FSM proxy measure (Ward, Area Action Partnership (AAP) and Family First Areas (FFA) with the following results:
  - (a) Peterlee East ward had the highest eligibility at 54.2%, followed by Aycliffe West (53.2%), Woodhouse Close ward (46.5%) and Horden (46.4%);
  - (b) Of the 63 wards, 35 had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (c) Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 39%, followed by the 4 Together AAP with 38.7%;



- (d) Of the 14 AAPs, six had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (e) Easington Families First Area (FFA) had the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at 42.1%, followed by Peterlee FFA at 40%. Of the 14 FFAs, ten had higher proportions than the county average;
  - (f) Children with a SEN Support Plan or Education Health and Care Plan show disproportional disadvantage, for example, 61.1% of pupils living in the Midridge Central 2 Lower Super Output Area (LOSA) were eligible for FSM, with on average over one in four (29.6%) eligible for FSM across the county.
  - (g) one in four, round 24% (DfE) of families eligible for FSM did not take up offer in 2020/21.
- 5 **Deprivation Measure:** County Durham is ranked 48 out of 151 upper tier local authorities in England with rank 1 being the most deprived (2019) (up from the ID2015 ranking of 59th).
- 6 **Universal Credit Claims:** The number of households in County Durham claiming Universal Credit (UC) has increased by 63.1% since February 2020, rising to nearly 46,500 households in February 2023. This large rise in is, in part, likely due to the effects of the COVID19 lockdown. Within this group the proportion of households claiming UC with children is around 45.4%, with the largest concentration in single parent households where 33.3% of households claiming UC were single parent households (15,700 households in February 2023). 'Couple' households with children represented around 11.6% of UC households, a rise of 74% since February 2020, rising to 5,400 households.

---

## **Appendix 4: Information Leaflets for Families**

4a – Financial Support

4b – Healthy Start Leaflet

4c – Family Hub Start of Life

---

Attached as separate documents.

---

## **Appendix 5: Cutting the Cost of the School Day**

---

Attached as separate document.

## Appendix 6: Fun and Food Branding



# Plan on a Page: Impact of poverty on children, young people and families (2023-2024)

**Aim:** The Child Poverty Working Group aims to use all available resources to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham.

## Priorities

1. To understand the current level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources

2. All those who have contact with C, YP and F in County Durham have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity

3. Promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive

4. Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment

## Outcome Measures: How we will know if we have been successful?

- a. Local and national quantitative and qualitative data and intelligence along with feedback from children, young people and families will ensure we have an accurate understanding of the level and impact of poverty for children in our neighbourhoods across County Durham.
- b. We will have a set of key measures of poverty across County Durham.
- c. We will have a communication strategy which reduces the stigma of poverty and promotes access to support

- a. We will deliver 'Cutting the Cost of the School and Pre School Day' programme to an additional 50 nurseries and 75 schools/ colleges in communities in top 30% deprived neighbourhoods.
- b. 500 multi-agency staff are registered to use the new AiCD portal and report on usage.
- c. Financial ability training will be delivered to 200 key stakeholders/partners who work/have contact with children and families.
- d. We will increase the uptake of FSM with eligible families from 76% to 80% in line with regional uptake
- e. We will increase the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers from 74% to 78%.

- a. 50,000 children will access the County Durham 'Fun and Food' programme in 2023. 50 % on FSM
- b. 25,000 children will access free swimming sessions in 2023/24.
- c. We will establish a Parent and Carer Panel
- d. Children and families have access to range of activities available in and through all Family Hubs in County Durham
- e. Parents have access to digital information about health, educational and wellbeing

- a. DurhamWorks provide support to young people who are NEET to progress into sustained education, employment and training pathways, including Apprenticeships;
- b. DurhamWorks provide specialist careers advice and pathways for Looked after Children, Care Leavers and SEND to enable young people to realise their aspirations;
- c. DurhamWorks deliver the Workplaces Project to Year 10 and Year 12 students in secondary schools and school sixth forms;
- d. DurhamWorks Programme for Schools supports students in Years 11 who are identified at risk of becoming NEET in secondary schools (including special schools and alternative education providers);
- e. DurhamEnable support individuals who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to access employment.
- f. We will increase access and take up of Care to Learn by parents aged under 20 years old.

## Actions: What are we going to do?

- 1.1 The group will use an agreed definition of poverty.
- 1.2 National and local child poverty data and intelligence, hosted on Durham Insights will be analysed and shared to help inform and target service developments.
- 1.3 We will report and monitor against the set of agreed poverty measures which impact on children, young people and families
- 1.4 Use Business Intelligence and all available analytics to better understand and inform actions
- 1.5 We will use the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing to work with communities and partners to review and reframe communication and engagement plans to reduce stigma around poverty and increase uptake of financial entitlements and support.

- 2.1 Promote to all educational settings the 'Cutting the Cost of the School Day' and 'Pre-School Day' resources and deliver a targeted programme to an additional 50 nurseries and 75 schools/colleges. ?impact
- 2.2 Train Early Help practitioners, CYP SW, Midwives, Health Visitors to use the new AiCD portal;
- 2.3 Promote Making Every Contact Count Training to a broad range of key stakeholders working/contact with children, young people and families.
- 2.4 Financial ability training will be targeted at and accessed by key stakeholders working with/contact with CYP&F.
- 2.5 Develop and implement the Financial Inclusion Support Officer role in up to 9 secondary schools
- 2.6 Work with key partners and through co-production with children and families to develop and implement a targeted programme to increase the update of financial support including Free School Meals available to families.
- 2.7 We will develop a communication and marketing campaign to increase the uptake of Healthy Start programme.

- 3.1 Continue to develop and deliver an engaging and coordinated countywide 'Fun and Food' programme in line with DfE expectations and community need including during half term holidays.
- 3.2 Source sustainable funding to provide a Fun and Food' programme during half term holidays
- 3.3 We will develop a pathway to provide appropriate baby safety equipment to eligible families
- 3.4 We will develop and provide access to a 'Baby Bank' of essential baby clothes and equipment in all Family Hubs.
- 3.5 We will establish a pilot to promote social inclusion and mobility including supporting access to health appointments for pregnant women and their partners on low income
- 3.6 We will poverty proof all leisure centres to promote access and inclusion
- 3.7 We will promote access to free swim activities during weekends and school holidays
- 3.8 We will develop a digital offer accessible for parents

- 4.1 DurhamWorks will provide support to young people who are NEET to progress into sustained education, employment and training pathways, including Apprenticeships.
- 4.2 DurhamWorks will provide specialist careers advice and pathways for Children Looked after, Care Leavers and SEND to enable young people to realise their aspirations.
- 4.3 Provide opportunities for Year 10 and Year 12 students to learn about the world of work through visits to employers as part of the Workplaces Project.
- 4.4 DurhamWorks Programme for Schools will support students in Years 10 / 11 who are identified at risk of becoming NEET in secondary schools (including special schools and alternative education providers).
- 4.5 DurhamEnable will support individuals who have learning, physical and mental health barriers to access employment.
- 4.6 We will monitor and report on Care to Learn for young parents in County Durham

## Enabling Factors: What will make our outcomes possible

We will apply the **GMCA Framework for an effective local anti-poverty strategy** to inform our work the **County Durham Wellbeing Approach principles** to all work of the Child Poverty Working Group

**Social Inclusion Team**

We will apply the **THRIVE model** to ensure proportionate and tailored response to service design and delivery

Whole system approach to ensure effective interventions. Workforce development based around making every contact count

Strong leadership and leading by example across all areas e.g. councillors, leaders, education.

Connecting with our communities through County Durham Area Action Partnerships

This page is intentionally left blank

## Free Independent Advice

### Age UK County Durham

Age UK County Durham provide a free and impartial service to help people aged 50 and over across County Durham to maximise their income. A holistic approach ensures clients receive expert support throughout their claim journey, whilst also addressing other issues including aids/ adaptations, energy, care provision and client welfare.

**Tel: 0191 374 6367**

**Email: [your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk](mailto:your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk)**

### Citizens Advice County Durham

Citizens Advice County Durham are a local charity who provide debt and other advice to thousands of people every year. Their services are free, confidential and impartial, so if you're struggling with your Council Tax bill, or any other debts, they can provide guidance, money advice and debt solutions.

**[www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk)**

**Tel: 0300 323 2000 Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm**

### Community Money Advice County Durham

This project ran by Durham Christian Partnership offers a free, non-judgemental and confidential service for anyone struggling with financial issues, debt or managing their money. They offer appointments at a number of foodbank centres across the county, as well as offering advice by telephone, email, post or video call. In special circumstances they can arrange home visits.

**[www.durhamcp.org.uk/community-money-advice-county-durham](http://www.durhamcp.org.uk/community-money-advice-county-durham)**

**Tel: 0191 303 7514 to request a callback  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm**

### East Durham Trust

East Durham Trust are a local charity who provide support services to anyone who lives in the East of Durham. This includes benefits advice, debt advice and emergency food parcels.

**[www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk](http://www.eastdurhamtrust.org.uk)**

**Tel: 0191 569 3511 Monday to Thursday  
9am to 5pm and Friday 9am - 4.30pm**



### MoneyHelper

The Government's MoneyHelper service provides clear money and pension guidance online and over the phone. Money help all in one place, that's free to use.

**[www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)**

**Tel: 0800 138 7777 Monday to Friday - 8am to 6pm**

### StepChange

StepChange are a national charity who provide free and independent advice on your financial situation.

**[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)**

**Tel: 0800 138 1111 Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 4pm**

### Other sources of debt advice

The council has information on other organisations who can offer you help and support on how to manage debt.

**[www.durham.gov.uk/debtadvice](http://www.durham.gov.uk/debtadvice)**

**[www.durhamlocate.org.uk](http://www.durhamlocate.org.uk)**

## Help with savings and loans

### NEfirst Credit Union

The NEfirst Credit Union provide low cost and affordable loan facilities and saving accounts. They also have a cashback scheme for the purchase of furniture and white goods, if you have been referred to them for a loan through the welfare assistance scheme.

**[www.nefirstcu.co.uk](http://www.nefirstcu.co.uk)**

**Tel: 0330 055 3666 Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm**

### Stop Loan Sharks

If you are a victim of a loan shark, Stop Loan Sharks can help you get a loan shark off your back. They offer online chat and call back services.

**[www.stoploansharks.co.uk](http://www.stoploansharks.co.uk)**

**Tel: 0300 555 2222 any time, 24/7**

### Protect yourself against scams

Unfortunately some people try to take advantage of others whilst they are vulnerable.

Find out what to look out for and how you can protect yourself at:

**[www.durham.gov.uk/scams](http://www.durham.gov.uk/scams)**

**#CountyDurhamTogether**



Better for everyone

53316 RES

# Finding financial help and support



## Finding financial help and support

If you're having trouble managing your money, with rent arrears or dealing with debt, you should get help as soon as possible. You can get free and impartial advice and support from a range of places.

This leaflet will help you know who to contact depending on your individual circumstances.

For information on the latest help available visit  
[www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithyourmoney](http://www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithyourmoney)

### Help from Durham County Council

We can:

- Provide general information and advice on Council Tax discounts, disregards and exemptions, including single person discount.
- Discuss any difficulties you have paying your Council Tax or Housing Benefit overpayment. We can discuss a payment plan to help with your overall household budgeting.
- Talk through your income to see if you may be entitled to Council Tax Reduction.
- Provide advice on claiming a Discretionary Housing Payment if you are having difficulties in paying a shortfall in your rent.

[www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

Tel: 03000 265 000 Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm



#CountyDurhamTogether

### Welfare Rights

We have specialist staff who can help you understand what benefits you may be entitled to, support you make a benefits claim, make an appeal against a benefit decision and provide representation at an appeal.

[www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights)

Tel: 03000 268 968 Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

### Moving house or going through a crisis?

You may be able to get help from our Welfare Assistance Scheme. This can be to help you stay or get into housing, or with your daily living expenses.

[www.durham.gov.uk/welfareassistance](http://www.durham.gov.uk/welfareassistance)

Tel: 03000 267 900 Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

### Free School Meals

Free school meals are available to all children in reception, year 1 and year 2. They are also available to other school age children whose parents/carers receive certain benefits.

[www.durham.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.durham.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)

Tel: 03000 268 003 Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm

### Energy efficiency

Due to significant rises in energy costs recently, many of us are trying to reduce our energy use. Our Warm Homes Campaign is a one-stop referral system for owner occupiers in County Durham. We offer advice and help residents access energy efficiency grants to have a warmer home and lower energy bills. We can also arrange a Managing Money Better appointment with us, to help you obtain the best deal from your energy supplier.

[www.durham.gov.uk/warmhomescampaign](http://www.durham.gov.uk/warmhomescampaign)

Tel: 03000 268 000 Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm



### Helping People keep their home

We can offer support and help if someone is homeless or worried about being homeless. If someone is in danger of losing their home, we will always try to prevent this from happening in the first instance. There is support available to help with financial difficulties.

[www.durham.gov.uk/housing](http://www.durham.gov.uk/housing)

Tel: 0808 196 8406 Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Above number available out of hours in an emergency including weekends, for anyone who is homeless and has nowhere else to stay.

### Private Rented Sector

We have a team that work with landlords to ensure properties are fit for habitation. The team also offer a free mediation service for landlords and tenants to try to sustain a tenancy instead of eviction.

[PRSLettings@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PRSLettings@durham.gov.uk)

[www.durham.gov.uk/preventeviction](http://www.durham.gov.uk/preventeviction)

### Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

The HIA provides advice, guidance and practical assistance to people who are older, disabled or on low incomes to repair, improve or adapt their homes, to enable them to maintain their independence in their chosen home.

[www.durham.gov.uk/homeimprovementagency](http://www.durham.gov.uk/homeimprovementagency)

### Financial Ability

If you are looking for ways to reduce your outgoings, why not ask your employer or local community centre to host one of our Financial Ability workshops. They are free of charge, and could help you, your colleagues, family, friends and neighbours to save money and learn the skills that could make you better off and in control of your money.

[www.durham.gov.uk/financialability](http://www.durham.gov.uk/financialability)



#CountyDurhamTogether



# A Healthy Start in County Durham



Free fruit, veg, milk, pulses and vitamins



If you're pregnant or have a child under 4 you could get extra money each week to buy healthy foods and milk.

[www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

 @NHSHealthyStart

## Get help to buy food and milk

The Healthy Start Scheme puts money on a card to help you buy these things:

- milk
- vegetables either fresh, frozen or tinned
- some tinned or dried foods
- baby formula milk

**You can also claim free vitamins.**

Healthy Start vouchers can be used in many local shops and supermarkets.



# vitamins

Get FREE vitamins for you and your baby with your NHS Healthy Start card. Ask your health visitor or check <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/> for a local supplier.

## What you can get?

- **£4.25** every week once you are 10 weeks pregnant
- **£8.50** every week once your child is born until they are 1 year old
- **£4.25** every week once your child is over 1 year old but under 4 years old
- Free vitamins

## Who can get it?

You can get money from the Healthy Start scheme if you are at least 10 weeks pregnant or you have children under 4 years old, and you or your family get certain benefits.

To find out more you can ask your midwife, health visitor or local family hub or go to [www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/)



## How do you apply for Healthy Start?

To apply for the Healthy Start scheme you will need to visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) or if you cannot apply online contact the NHS Healthy Start helpline on **0300 330 7010**.



Visit [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



Fill in the online application form



Receive your pre-paid card in the post



You'll need to activate your card to get your PIN before using it.



Shop for healthy food and milk in most retail stores that sell the eligible food and milk items – to use your NHS Healthy Start card the shop must accept Mastercard® payments.



You'll need to insert your card into the card reader and enter your PIN when you make your first transaction.

If you need help to apply for Healthy Start, someone else can do it for you. You must be there when they do this for you so that you can give the correct personal details and say you accept the terms and conditions of the scheme.



## How to activate your card

When you get your card in the post you need to activate it before you can use it. You do this by calling **0300 330 2090**.

## If you want more information

Visit [www.durham.gov.uk/article/24281/Apply-for-Healthy-Start-vouchers](http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24281/Apply-for-Healthy-Start-vouchers) – the QR code below will take you there if you scan it with your mobile. Or you can ask your midwife, health visitor or local family hub staff for more information and they will help you.



If you want this information in another language please visit <https://media.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/resources/f/nhs-healthy-start-scheme/healthcare-professionals/materials-in-other-languages-2> or scan this code with your smartphone.



For more information about how we can help you as a family, including: help with your money, staying healthy, relationships and life skills please go to [www.durham.gov.uk/helpforfamilies](http://www.durham.gov.uk/helpforfamilies)



We run workshops across County Durham to give you examples of what you can cook with the food you buy using your Healthy Start card. For more information please contact the Harrogate and District Foundation Trust Infant Feeding Team at [hdf.t.durhaminfantfeedingteam@nhs.net](mailto:hdf.t.durhaminfantfeedingteam@nhs.net)



# Start for Life

Across County Durham, we want families to thrive, so we've put together what we call our Start for Life offer.

This brings together all the people who care for you and your family like those giving health care, family advice, training and fun classes.

It has useful information for parents and family members from before a baby is born through to their second birthday.

You can also visit our website  
**[www.durham.gov.uk/helpforfamilies](http://www.durham.gov.uk/helpforfamilies)**

# Before your baby arrives



**Finding out you are going to be a parent can be exciting or terrifying, or sometimes both! Whether it is your first child, or you are adding to your family, you may feel like you are stepping into a whole new world. Don't worry, we are here to support you and get you ready to welcome your new baby.**

Whether you're having a baby yourself, are the partner of a pregnant woman, or are getting ready to welcome a child into your family through surrogacy, fostering or adoption, we're here to guide you and offer emotional support and practical guidance to prepare you.

We offer courses to learn more about your little one and activities or groups that you can attend and you can find lots of our advice and support online too.

## In-person courses

You can come into our Family Hubs to do a FREE course before your baby arrives. Part of the course is about pregnancy and labour, but lots of it is about after baby arrives. It is as much for dads, partners and family or friends who support you as it is for mums. Find out more from your midwife.

## Online Courses

Our FREE online courses mean you can do them at a place and time to suit you. A popular one is **Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth and your baby**, which is for everyone in your new baby's life, be that parents-to-be, grandparents, carers, relatives or friends. This course is also available for women only couples. There are lots of other courses to help you as your child grows up too. Find them all at [www.durham.gov.uk/solihull](http://www.durham.gov.uk/solihull)

**Me, You and Baby Too** is a course designed to make things better for you, your partner, and your baby. It is for couples who have just had, or are about to have a baby. It looks at how to manage being tired and stressed when your baby arrives and how to deal with those challenges together. You can sign up at: [https://skills.oneplusone.org.uk/users/sign\\_up](https://skills.oneplusone.org.uk/users/sign_up)

## Being fit and well while pregnant

Getting some exercise, eating well and keeping up with your antenatal appointments will all help you to have a healthy pregnancy.



### You should:

- ✓ Contact a midwife as soon as you find out you're pregnant
- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Stop drinking alcohol
- ✓ Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- ✓ Take folic acid daily for the first 12 weeks of your pregnancy
- ✓ Take 10 micrograms of vitamin D each day throughout your pregnancy
- ✓ Try to stay active and fit



Get more information on healthy eating and exercise during pregnancy at [www.durham.gov.uk/healthypregnancy](http://www.durham.gov.uk/healthypregnancy)

If you, or your partner, have problems with drinking or drugs, help and support is available.

Find out more at [www.durham.gov.uk/alcohol](http://www.durham.gov.uk/alcohol)



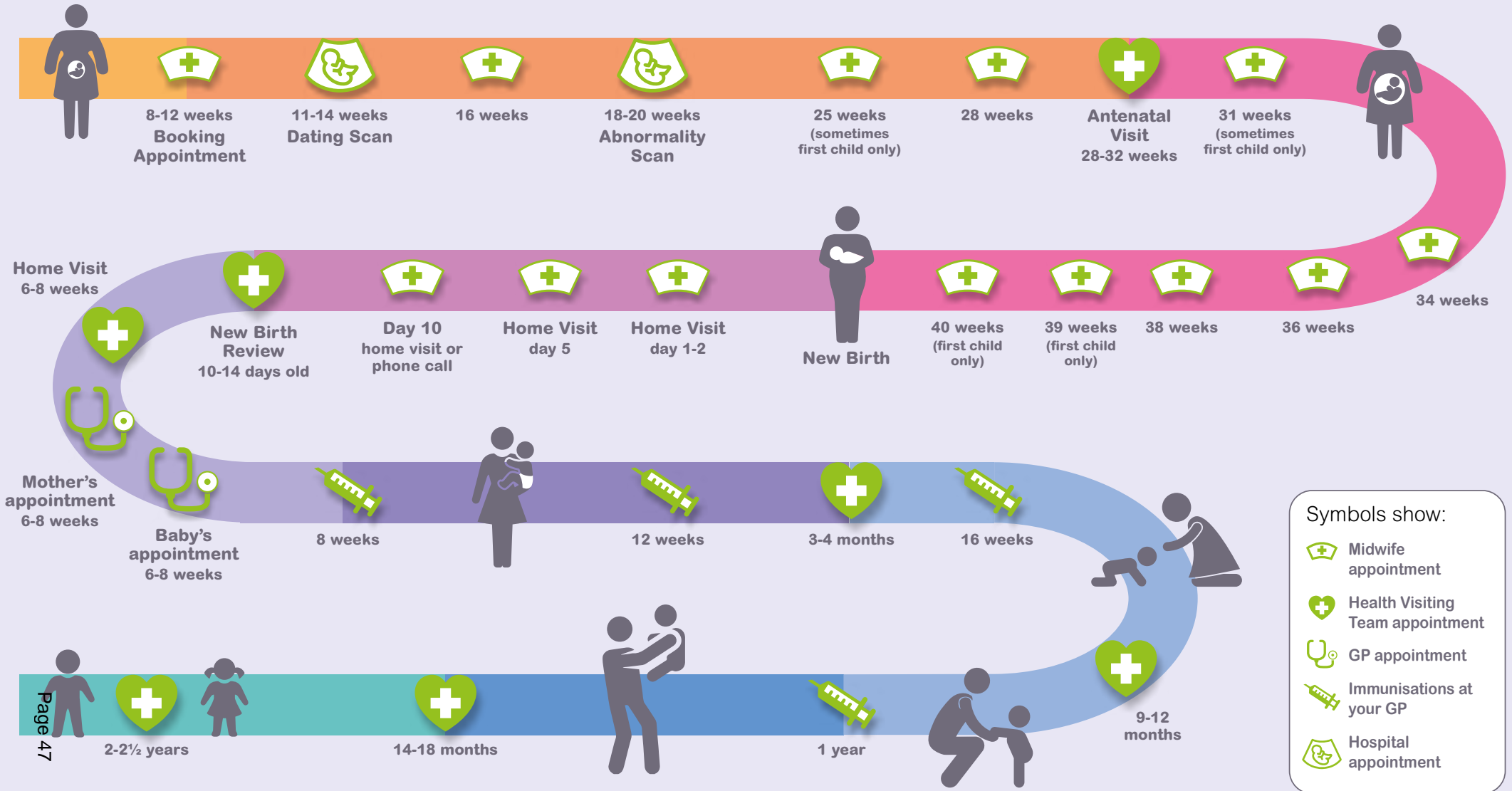
If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can get help and support at [www.durham.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.durham.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

If you are in immediate danger call **999**.

# Appointments and visits

When you find out you're pregnant, your midwife will be in touch with information and dates of future appointments.

The map below shows you the minimum number of times you can expect to meet with somebody while you are pregnant or once you have welcomed a child into your family. If you are ever concerned about your baby before or after they are born, you can contact your midwife or health visitor at any time.



**Symbols show:**

- Midwife appointment
- Health Visiting Team appointment
- GP appointment
- Immunisations at your GP
- Hospital appointment

## When your baby arrives

Page 48



**It is a very emotional time when your baby arrives and particularly in the first few weeks this can be overwhelming for the whole family. It's common to feel like this, and the Family Hub teams are here to support you.**

Your health visiting team are also there to provide help and support. This may just be some reassurance, either over the phone or a visit, to help you and your baby while you adjust to your new family life. Nobody will judge you, so no matter how you feel don't be afraid to get in touch. You can call them on **03000 263 538**.

## Feeding your baby



### Milk

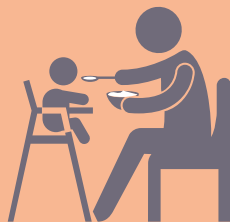
Breastfeeding gives your baby the best start in life. It has health benefits for your baby and can help you and your baby build close relationships. In Durham we have the UNICEF Baby Friendly Award.

No matter how you feed your baby, we are here to help you learn how to recognise when your baby needs food and comfort. We offer really practical help in a number of ways from one-to-one support to friendly groups, ask your Family Hub for what's on offer near you.

You can also get breastfeeding support from the National Breastfeeding Helpline. Call on **0300 100 0212** from 9.30am-9.30pm every day of the year. Visit **www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk** to find out more.

## Moving on from milk

Get all the latest tips on what to safely start your little ones off with from first tastes to first dinners. We've got healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy and ideas to get even the fussiest of children to eat well. Go to **www.durham.gov.uk/feedingandweaning**

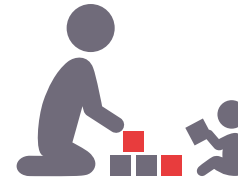


## Things to do with your baby

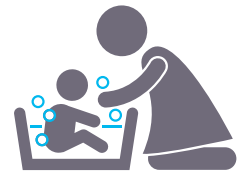


Even with a new little person in your life, it can sometimes feel like you're all alone. So we're here to make sure you always have someone to call or somewhere to go with your baby to meet other families.

Our Family Hubs run FREE **Baby and Me** for you to attend with your child in their first year, and **Toddler and Me** for you when they are 1 and 2 years old. These are weekly sessions for you to attend and include sensory play, baby massage, songs and stories. Anyone in your child's life can come along with your child to learn more about how they are growing and developing and ways they can support this.



There are lots of activities in your local Family Hub, or you can visit **www.countydurhamfamilies.info** for information about activities in your community.



If your child has special educational needs and/or disabilities there is lots of help and support available.

Visit **www.durham.gov.uk/localoffer** or if you are concerned about your child's development speak to your health visitor.



## Help with money




Having a baby can be expensive. You might be able to get a grant to help with living costs and Healthy Start Vouchers to help you buy healthy food, milk and vitamins. Ask for more information in your Family Hub.


We also have lots of advice and links to support for things like childcare, benefits, heating and energy costs at **www.durham.gov.uk/helpwithyourmoney**






## Chat to us

 **/FamilyHubs** – follow our page to keep up to date and you can send us a direct message on there too

 Call us on **03000 261 111**

 Pop into your local Family Hub. There are 15 across the county:

- Bishop Auckland
- Brandon
- Chester-le-Street
- Consett
- Durham
- Easington
- Ferryhill
- Horden
- Newton Aycliffe
- Peterlee
- Seaham
- Stanley
- Tudhoe Moor
- Wheatley Hill
- Willington

Get full details and addresses at **[www.durham.gov.uk/familyhubs](http://www.durham.gov.uk/familyhubs)**

You will need to register with our Family Hubs – you can do this online or when you go into the hub.

Register online at **[www.durham.gov.uk/FamilyHubsRegistration](http://www.durham.gov.uk/FamilyHubsRegistration)** or scan here:



If you are worried about your child, or somebody else's child, contact First Contact on **03000 26 79 79**.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format:



Braille,



Audio,



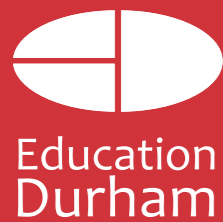
AAA Large print.

Email: **[altformat.familyhubs@durham.gov.uk](mailto:altformat.familyhubs@durham.gov.uk)**

This page is intentionally left blank



# Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty



A service provided by



In partnership with



County Durham Children and Families Partnership

## Acknowledgements

Staff and pupils of St Andrew's Primary and North Park Primary, Bishop Barrington School, St John's School and Sixth Form College and Belmont Community School.

Staff of Edinburgh City Council for allowing resources and training materials to be adapted.

CPAG Scotland for their advice and training materials.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

 Braille
  Audio
  Large print

العربية Arabic	(中文(繁體字)) Chinese	اردو Urdu
polski Polish	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi	Español Spanish
বাংলা Bengali	हिन्दी Hindi	Deutsch German
Français French	Türkçe Turkish	Melayu Malay

[cpd@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cpd@durham.gov.uk)  
 03000 265 850





## Introduction

Poverty can have a massive impact on people's lives! It can affect a child's social, educational, health and personal development. Living in a poor household can reduce children's expectations of their lives and lead to a cycle where poverty is repeated from generation to generation. The Children and Families Partnership welcomes work to address the cause and impact of poverty on families across the county.

We understand the importance of addressing poverty and offering help as early as possible, and acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by the Child Poverty Working Group in identifying ways to cut the cost of the school day, helping to give young people the best start in life and enabling them to reach their full potential.

"To tolerate children and their families living in poverty is morally wrong. No civilised society should permit it. To invest in children is to invest in the future. I'm sure we would all commit to that. Let's do it"

**Cllr Olwyn Gunn**

Cabinet member for Children and Young People's Services

## Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty

### Top tips to minimise costs

These top tips have been developed by staff and pupils who took part in the 'Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty' workshops. The areas for consideration were most commonly identified as placing financial pressure upon families. The top tips aim to provide schools with a list of suggestions to attempt to minimise the cost of the school day on all families. Some ideas may already be in place but these recommendations allow schools to further develop good practice.

### School uniform and PE kits

- Allow uniform to be purchased from a range of suppliers as opposed to one single supplier with a set cost.
- Explore 'bulk buy/sibling deals' with suppliers to minimise costs.
- Explore the option of having sew on school logo badges to allow parents to buy generic uniform.
- Regularly hold upcycle school uniform/swap shop events and encourage pupils to take part in organising these events (avoid negative language such as second hand uniform sale).
- Have upcycled uniform readily available in reception everyday as well as during parents evenings, opening evenings etc.
- Link in with local charity shops to encourage them to have a school uniform section.
- Open these events to everyone: avoid targeting only Free School Meal/Pupil Premium (FSM/PP) pupils and families as personal circumstances may not have been disclosed.
- Allow for generic PE kit to be worn.
- Revise behaviour policies linked to incorrect uniform.
- Sign-post families to school clothing grants and vouchers (School Benevolent Fund) [www.durham.gov.uk/schoolbenevolentfund](http://www.durham.gov.uk/schoolbenevolentfund)



### Training requests

If you would like your school to take part in a 'Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty' training session please contact [cpd@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cpd@durham.gov.uk)

## Food in school

Is the cost of your breakfast club a barrier for some pupils attending?

- Consider having volunteers run the club to reduce staffing costs.
- Contact local supermarkets/businesses for donations.
- Offer daily/weekly sibling deals for families to attend breakfast club.
- Consider providing all pupils with a basic packed lunch for trips not just those on FSM.
- In addition to the KS1 free fruit for schools scheme, explore the option of having fruit in the classroom each morning, available to everyone.
- Save uneaten fruit, yoghurts, cereal bars from packed lunches and have these available for pupils to take home if they would like them.



## After school clubs and trips

- Ensure that dates and costs of trips are given out at the start of the academic year (or earlier) to give plenty of advance warning. Consider spacing trips out across the year more evenly.
- Set up payment schemes for parents/carers to pay towards school trips in instalments (link in with Durham Savers [www.durham.gov.uk/durhamsavers](http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamsavers)) - ask parents to return financial contributions not pupils.
- Pupils to take part in fundraising events for school trips to minimise the amount of financial contribution needed.
- Consider each year group trips against one another to account for families with more than one pupil in school to avoid extra financial pressure.
- Revise any first-come first-served policies (with payments) as this may be excluding pupils from low income families from taking part.
- Review the range of clubs on offer to minimise the amount of charged activities.
- Have a weekly token scheme to enable free access once per week to any charged school clubs.
- Consider the equipment required for after school clubs (football boots, rugby kit, dance uniform) and whether these could be borrowed/rented from school to ensure all can take part.
- Avoid sending letters home with pupils that request financial contributions. Send these direct to parents/carers.

## Training requests

If you would like your school to take part in a 'Cut the cost of the school day: Raising awareness of child poverty' training session please contact [cpd@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cpd@durham.gov.uk)



# **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Child Poverty in County Durham 22 September 2023**

**Karen Davison  
Strategic Manager, One Point Service  
Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children  
CYPS**

**Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children**



Agenda Item 6b

# Child Poverty Working Group

***Aim: To use all available resources to help prevent, reduce, and mitigate the impact of poverty on children, young people and their families in County Durham.***

## **4 Key priorities:**

- 1. to understand the current level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources;**
- 2. to support all those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham to have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity;**
- 3. promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive and**
- 4. raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.**



**Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children**





# Priority 1: To understand the level and impact of poverty on children, young people and families in County Durham in order to better target support and resources



**48<sup>th</sup> most  
deprived local  
authority**

**23.6 % of children  
live in poverty (19.2%  
across England)**

**18% of children live  
in the top 10% most  
deprived areas**



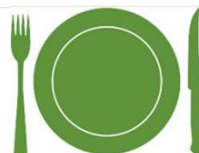
**50% of children live  
in the top 30% most  
deprived areas**



**27.1% of children  
aged 0 to 4 live in  
poverty (18% in  
England)**



**11 to 15 age  
group  
24.4%(Up by  
57%)**



**Children claiming free school  
meals 30.9% 22,000**



## **Priority 2: To support all those who have contact with children, young people and families in County Durham to have the skills and knowledge to identify and support children and families affected by poverty at the earliest opportunity**

- **Financial Ability Training** for frontline staff
- **Advice in County Durham Portal**
- **A dedicated web page [Help with your money](#)**
- **[Help with buying items for school - Durham County Council](#)**
- **Healthy Start promotion**
- **Family Hub offer** - pre-loved clothes and baby equipment, access food hampers, signposting community pantries, access CAB etc



# Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children

### **Priority 3: Promote social inclusion to ensure all children, young people and families have access to health, educational and wellbeing activities which build resilience and supports children and families to thrive.**

- **Leisure Centre transformation programmes –ongoing co-production with young people**
- **Poverty awareness training for all Leisure Centre staff**
- **'Splashability' free holiday and weekend sessions- April to June= 20,666 SEN/D = 1067**
- **Improving access to Leisure Centres –free gym membership targeted at young people aged 11 and over =92 memberships**
- **Physical activity framework health inequalities /affordability**



# Fun and Food programme

Throughout 2022 a total of 46,000 children and young people engaged in Fun and Food provision

Arts and crafts, environmental and wildlife activities, STEM activities and sports & physical activity, yoga and wellbeing.  
Healthy meals and snacks were provided with each activity.

Development of specific and Fun and Food provision for children with SEND and older young people 11 +

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/funandfood>

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/25530/Videos-of-previous-fun-and-food-activities>



# FUN & FOOD

Holiday activities with healthy food

Funded by the Department for Education



## **Priority 4: Raise aspirations and resilience of children and young people making the move into further education, training or employment.**

- Young people aged 16-17 who are NEET in County Durham is 5.6%, Northeast= 5.4% England= 3.2%
- Durham Young People 'Not Known' = 0.5%, North East=0.7% England= 1.8%
- **DurhamWorks** Programme for Schools
- **The Workplaces Project**
- **DurhamWorks 3**
- **DurhamWorks Futures**
- <https://durhamworks.info/>



# Additional support

## Household Support Fund 2022/23

- ✓ FSM food vouchers= 69,072 vouchers total of £3.9 million
- ✓ A School support fund of £115,700 providing essential school items,
- ✓ Care Leavers (£100) & Kinship Carers (£100)
- ✓ Christmas Hampers = 1,400

## Household Support Fund 2223/24

- ✓ FSM food vouchers £150 per child over x2 instalments
- ✓ School Support Fund
- ✓ Care Leavers (£100) & Kinship Carers (£100)
- ✓ Start for Life Fund+£195k = safe sleep and safety equipment
- ✓ Christmas Hampers = 2000

## ✓ Education Fun Fund

- ✓ Stronger Families Grant and Greggs Fund - Home safety equipment/cots and beds/washing machines
- ✓ Free School Period Products Scheme-national scheme
- ✓ Feeding Families Food Parcels and Hygiene Packs
- ✓ Reducing Food Waste -The Bread-and-Butter Thing (TBBT)

**Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children**

# Next Steps

- (a) Continue to investigate FSM automatic enrolment and potential pilot to change biometric system
- (b) Continue to develop and innovate County Durham's **Fun and Food programme** in co-production with young people and families;
- (c) provide all schools, nurseries and college with '**Cutting cost of school/ pre-school day**' information and target education establishments in area of high deprivation/ low uptake of FSM for additional help and support; digital poverty
- (d) Introduce and **pilot Financial Inclusion Support Officer** role within a number of secondary schools
- (e) Continue to develop and implement Family Hub and Start for Life programme;**
- (f) Roll out Start for Life Fund- safe sleeping and home safety equipment**
- (g) Work with Public Health, CST, young people and families to explore the impact of **transport costs for young people and families** accessing cultural, leisure and wellbeing activities.

# Any Questions ?



**Early Help, Inclusion & Vulnerable Children**





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

**22 September 2023**

**Home to School Transport Services –  
Consultation Outcomes**



**Report of:**

**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 present the committee with the outcomes of the public consultation in relation to Durham County Council's Home to School Transport Service.

**Executive summary**

- 2 A report was presented to the committee on 10th March 2023 which set out Cabinet's decision to undertake a consultation on its Home to School Transport Service.
- 3 The consultation was agreed in the context of significantly increased pressure on funding and growing demand for council services over recent years, especially statutory services.
- 4 It was informed by an external review of the Service in 2021, which identified a number of proposals to transform the service and to support the management of demand and pressures and support greater independence for young people.
- 5 The consultation on the proposals took place between 27 February 2023 and 12 April 2023. The proposals related to the following areas of Home to School Transport provision:

- The provision of the Durham County Council's Concessionary Schemes.
  - The effective and efficient provision of transport journeys and passenger assistants.
  - The promote of Independence skills of young people through travel training and other opportunities.
  - Simplifying personal travel budgets for parents/carers of pupils with SEN and those living in remote rural areas to provide greater flexibility for parents.
  - A review of unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County, especially schools with high volumes of routes.
  - A review of potential procurement options for home to school transport services in relation to impact on value for money and associated competitive pricing.
- 6 The Consultation included a public survey, face to face and virtual meetings, media communication, information sheets and easy read materials.
- 7 There was a total of 324 responses to the online questionnaire, as well as written responses from key stakeholder group.
- 8 Based on the work undertaken and the consultation outcomes, Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as set out in the cabinet report considered on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023. These are included in the attached presentation and set out in the main body of the report at paragraph 122.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the content of the report and presentation.

## Background

- 10 The Council has a statutory duty under various Acts and Statutory Guidance to provide free 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.
- 11 In order to comply with statutory Home to School Transport duties local authorities must undertake the following:
- Promote the use of sustainable travel and transport;
  - Make transport arrangements for all eligible children.
- 12 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);
  - Pupils with a disability or mobility requirement.
- 13 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.
- 14 Durham County Council's Home to School Transport service provides daily transport to over 9,000 passengers. This is made up of mainstream and SEND passengers along with other special provision. This requires over 1,000 transport contracts to be in place which utilise over 300 different transport suppliers.

- 15 The consultation was agreed in the context of significantly increased pressure on funding and growing demand for council services over recent years, especially statutory services.
- 16 The increasing pressures on the Home to School Transport Budget and reasons for this are set out in the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee consultation report dated 10 March 2023.
- 17 To help understand the above 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.
- 18 The outcome of the review was the development of a range of potential service improvements as follows:
- 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/carers of pupils with SEN 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.
  - Review potential procurement options for home to school transport services in relation to impact on value for money and associated competitive pricing.
- 19 On 8 February 2023, Cabinet agreed to undertake a public consultation on the above proposals.

### **Consultation Approach and Timeline**

- 20 The Consultation took place between **27 February 2023 and 12 April 2023** and was implemented in accordance with the Council's Consultation Statement and Consultation Protocol (March 2019), statutory and government guidance, as well as the general requirements of public law.

- 21 The Consultation process and planned activities were set out in the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Consultation report dated 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023. They included a public survey, face to face and virtual meetings with stakeholder groups, media communication, information sheets and easy read materials.

### Response to the Online Consultation and Questionnaire

- 22 There was a total of 324 responses to the online questionnaire. A profile of responders is detailed below (note that some responders have identified themselves against more than 1 cohort).

	Frequency	%age
A parent/carer of a child/children with additional needs	88	27.8%
A parent/carer of a child/children without additional needs	157	49.7%
A child or young person with additional needs	1	0.3%
A child or young person without additional needs	9	2.8%
A resident (not parent/carer of a child using home to school transport)	33	10.4%
An educational professional/governor	28	8.9%
A transport provider	12	3.8%
Other	8	2.5%

- 23 Of those responders who identified themselves as a parent, the following information was also provided:

	Frequency	%age
My child receives school transport which we pay for	83	35.9%
My child receives free school transport due to an unsafe walking route	51	22.1%
My child receives solo transport with a passenger assistant	6	2.6%
My child receives solo transport without a passenger assistant	7	3.0%
My child receives group transport with a passenger assistant	34	14.7%
My child receives group transport without a passenger assistant	26	11.3%
My child does not get home to school transport provided by the council	46	19.9%

- 24 A full summary of responses provided to the questionnaire and a summary of questions/points raised at consultation meetings was

included in the cabinet report dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023, which is included as a background paper.

- 25 The feedback from the consultation was aggregated and used to help shape the report recommendations.

## Findings from the Survey Feedback and Consultation Meetings

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

- 26 The Concessionary scheme provides transport to some young people with seats being sold to pupils who are **not** statutorily entitled to free transport. There are three schemes which operate in County Durham:
- **The DCC standard scheme.** When the Council commissions transport for statutorily entitled pupils there may be some spare seats available which can be made available to non-entitled pupils. This practice is common across Local Authorities in England. The current charge is £1.63 per day;
  - **The DCC maintained scheme.** This was implemented following policy changes that took effect in September 2012, where transport capacity was maintained on some 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.
  - **The Schools' Scheme.** Concessionary transport is also provided by some partner schools which the Council arranges on their behalf. Schools set their own charges for the provision which is cost neutral to the Council. This scheme was therefore not included in the consultation.
- 27 The consultation sought views on the following:
- 28 **We currently provide subsidised concessionary transport for some children who are not statutorily entitled to free transport. The current charge is £1.63 per return journey. Do you agree or disagree that we should charge a higher fare to help meet more of the cost.**
- 29 63% (201 responses) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this proposal, with 23.2% of responses agreeing/strongly agreeing. A further 13.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 30 The percentage of respondents who were parents and are currently paying for transport who disagreed/strongly disagreed was 86.6% (78 responses).
- 31 52.4% (165 responses) felt this would have a negative or extremely negative impact on them. This increased to 89% of the parents who responded who are currently paying for Home to School Transport.
- 32 There were 204 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 48 responses identified that a significantly higher fare would add to the cost of living pressures currently being experienced.
  - 30 responses responded that Home to School Travel should be provided free to children.
  - 29 responses identified that the increase was unaffordable.
- 33 **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.**
- 34 71.4% (228 responses) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this proposal, whilst 18.2% agreed/strongly agreed. A further 10.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 35 The percentage of respondents who were parents and are currently paying for transport who disagreed/strongly disagreed was 94% (78 responses).
- 36 There were 190 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 45 responses identified that the increase was unaffordable.
  - 34 responses identified the additional pressure this level of fare would add to the cost of living increases currently being experienced.
  - 28 responses identified that the increase was too high.
  - 25 responses responded that Home to School Travel should be provided free to children.

- 37 The consultation also highlighted the inequity of the current charging arrangements for concessionary schemes. Within the County, there are wide variations in the level of subsidy provided by individual schools for the School Schemes, which creates wide variations in the parental contributions required. Charges for the DCC Standard and Maintained Schemes are significantly below actual cost which benefits the parents of 515 young people who use these schemes. This variation in charging has created inequity within the system and has the potential to create significant dissatisfaction amongst parents in the future. For example, one response to the consultation made the point that 'If you compare rates for other schools in Durham County, the fee for School X is significantly higher.'
- 38 **Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to review and phase out concessionary transport for children who are not statutorily entitled to it?**
- 39 66.2% (208 responses) disagreed/strongly disagreed with this proposal, with 20.7% of responses agreeing/strongly agreeing. A further 13.1% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 40 The percentage of respondents who were parents and are currently paying for transport who disagreed/strongly disagreed was 76.9% (63 responses).
- 41 50.5% of responders (165 responses) felt this would have a negative or extremely negative impact on them. This increased to 76.5% for parents who are currently paying for Home to School Transport.
- 42 There were 190 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for their responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 25 responses stated that it would impact on school attendance of pupils.
  - 21 responses stated that Home to School Travel should be provided free to children.

#### Feedback from Group Consultations

- 43 Direct consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.
- 44 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:



- Referring to the maintained scheme it was suggested that consideration should be given to the working poor who may have difficulty affording additional costs.
- A £2.80 fare was expensive for some parents especially when there is a cost of living crisis.

45 Durham County Youth Council made the following comments:

- They worry about it going up and people not being able to afford it. £2.80 fare was expensive for some parents especially when there is a cost of living crisis.
- They talked about some pupils taking multiple buses to get to school (service buses) which could total £5 per day.

46 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:

- Would there be an option to pay for the journeys used rather than a blanket charge.
- If costs increase in line with public buses, will there be other similarities introduced e.g. being able to use a different bus to go to a different location on some days.
- By raising the cost to £2.80 per child will this result in a like for like service the child would receive if they used a public bus.
- How will these proposals affect schools with special arrangements in place as some parents already pay more per seat than the amount proposed.
- In rural areas, if the bus was withdrawn there is no alternative viable way for those children to get to school other than their parents driving them. There is no appropriate public transport alternative and walking or cycling would not be appropriate / safe. If each child had to be driven to school (instead of using the bus) this would mean approx. 16 separate car journeys which would have a negative impact on the environment as well as increasing congestion around the school.

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

- 47 Single person journeys and passenger assistants are mainly provided for pupils 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. The transported pupil is often accompanied by a Passenger Assistant. There has been a significant increase in numbers over recent years.
- 48 The consultation sought views on:
- 49 **Do you agree or disagree that the council should regularly review the types of home to school travel assistance it offers to meet the needs of children and ensure the most appropriate and cost-effective mode of transport is provided?**
- 50 76.5% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with the proposal, with 8.7% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. A further 14.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 51 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who have children with additional needs, 75.8% either strongly agreed/ agreed, which is broadly in line with the overall response.
- 52 There were 133 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 23 Responses identified the Best Interests of the Child as a key consideration.
  - 20 responses stated that the review of provision should be undertaken as the needs of children change over time.
  - 17 Responses stated that reviews should be undertaken to ensure best use of resources.
  - 14 responses identified the safety of the child as a key factor.
- 53 **Do you agree or disagree that the council should regularly review the provision of individual passenger assistants to ensure they are used cost effectively for children in receipt of home to school travel assistance?**

- 54 71.6% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with this proposal, with 10% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. A further 18.4% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 55 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who have children with additional needs, 70.1% strongly agreed/agreed, which is broadly in line with the overall response.
- 56 There were 100 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. Responses received followed similar themes to those in the previous question relating to single person transport. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 18 responses identified the safety of the child as a key factor.
  - 18 responses stated that reviews should be undertaken to ensure best use of resources.
  - 16 responses identified the best interests of the Child as a key consideration.
  - 14 responses stated that review of provision should be undertaken as the needs of children change over time.

#### Feedback from Group Consultations

- 57 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.
- 58 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:
- With reference to single person transport was this at the parents request or was it due to out of area placements being required for the Young Person
- 59 Durham County Youth Council made the following comments:
- Reviewing Single Person Transport will reduce cost and encourage social engagement of young people (if some move to other types of shared transport)
  - Young People's needs would need to be carefully analysed.
  - The need to consider the safety of passengers and Young People with SEND as they may struggle to engage in bus transport. If a child needs to be transported alone, this should be maintained.

60 The Xtreme Group, which is a representative group of Young People with special educational needs made the following comments:

- The need to consider routes and length of journey. Can Young People change their mind if they tried and weren't happy?
- Group transport can be overwhelming for some children, but also some children prefer to be on transport with their friends.
- Long transport journeys take up too much of the day and can mean the Young Person can get home quite late.
- The Council should look at individual needs not costs.
- Escorts should get to know the children/young people before they support young people on transport.
- Sometimes Escorts are not needed. They should be more targeted at younger children. They gave an example where a young person had a PA but didn't need one once they got older.
- The need for PA's who can support with medical needs.

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

61 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.

62 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 SEN will not be able to travel independently, those that are able, should be given the opportunity to do so.

63 The consultation sought views on:

64 **Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of an independent travel training scheme for children with SEND when it is appropriate to their abilities and needs?**

65 56.4% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with the proposal, with 21.3% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. A further 22.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

- 66 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who have children with additional needs, 51.1% strongly agreed/ agreed with the proposal which is broadly in line with the overall response. A further 37.5% of responses disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- 67 There were 145 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 50 responses identified that any scheme would have to be appropriate to the needs of the pupil/parent.
  - 50 Responses stated that a scheme could provide long-term benefit in helping to develop independent life skills.
  - 31 Responses identified concerns about the safety of the pupil.

#### Feedback from Group Consultations

- 68 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.
- 69 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:
- With reference to independence members suggested there were varying levels of vulnerability that should be taken into consideration and this should be reviewed child by child.
- 70 The Xtreme Group, which is a representative group of Young People with special educational needs made the following comments:
- Independent Travel Training is not appropriate for all young people but could work for some.
  - Getting transport with other children can make you feel more normal.
  - A good idea, only if the young person wants to try – not forced.
  - Young People who travel on their own can encourage other young people.
  - Should do a trial and get young people used to it.
  - It should be people you know who are supporting you with travel training e.g. school staff, family, support workers etc, not someone you don't know. Ask Young People who they want to support them.

- Travel training is part of SEND Promise so in line with this.
- 71 Making Changes Together (MCT), which is a representative group of parents of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:
- Supportive of Travel Training and feel that this can help children approaching 14-16 years and also their parents.
  - Consider starting Travel Training earlier than 14-16 years, maybe at start of Secondary school.
  - Highlighted the impact of Covid on some children who may have been happy to travel on a group/public transport pre-covid, but not now.
  - Queried whether travel training opportunities will apply to children who don't have an EHCP.
- 72 The Council is also considering options in respect of the introduction of Pick up Points. Pick up 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.
- 73 **When it is appropriate to their abilities and needs, do you agree or disagree that the use of agreed pickup points for children and young people with SEND can help to provide a more cost-effective service?**
- 74 46.1.% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with this proposal, whilst 24.7% of responses disagreed/strongly disagreed. A further 29.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 75 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who have children with additional needs, 37.5% strongly agreed/ agreed with the proposal. However, 47.7% of responses disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- 76 There were 118 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 37 Responses identified concerns about the safety of the pupil.
  - 22 responses identified the practicality of getting to the pick-up point / impact on parents.

- 17 Responses stated that it should be appropriate to the child/ young person's needs.
- 14 responses stated that where appropriate it could support the longer term independence of young people.

### Feedback from Group Consultations

- 77 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.
- 78 Making Changes Together (MCT), which is a representative group of parents of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:
- There will be a number of really important consideration which include family circumstances (such as other Young People in the family), age of the young person, the distance to travel – both to the pickup point and then to school etc)
  - Suggested a separate survey of parents to get their views when looking at the development of a scheme.
- 79 Durham Youth Council made the following comment:
- The location of the Pickup Point will be an important factor.
- 80 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:
- How would designated pick up points work for taxis. Surely the whole point is for a safe pick up and drop off from home. What if a child is a no show, how long does a driver wait.
  - SEND hubs (pickup points) - where will the hubs be located? Is there a distance set from your home? Who will decide when children attend these hubs - medical professionals, parents?
  - How will the hubs be policed and will parents get a travel budget to get their child to these hubs?
- 81 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. Personal

Travel Budgets are typically offered to SEN passengers but in Durham there is an increased opportunity to offer them in rural areas.

82 **Do you agree or disagree that simplified personal travel budgets can provide parents of children with SEND and those in rural areas with more flexibility to arrange their own transport for their child?**

83 39.1% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with the proposal, whilst 25.3% of responses disagreed/strongly disagreed. A further 35.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

84 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who have children with additional needs, opinion was evenly distributed with 40% strongly agreeing/ agreeing with the proposal and 37.6% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing.

85 There were 118 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:

- 22 Responses identified that a Personal Budget could provide flexibility and also promote independence.
- 19 responses queried if the budget payment would be sufficient to cover parents' costs.
- 19 Responses raised concerns about the practicality of parents managing transport.
- 10 responses identified that complexity of the scheme and value for money should be considered.

#### Feedback from Group Consultations

86 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.

87 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:

- Rural areas suffer from poor transport and consideration should be given to their impact on working parents.
- Sought clarity regarding the payment of personal budgets as to whether this was only for the time the child was in the vehicle.
- Queried if parents will be subject to the same rules as other drivers who transport children and will this be looked at as an option?



- 88 Making Changes Together (MCT), which is a representative group of parents of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:
- Many parents are not aware of Personal Travel Budgets and the Councils current scheme.
  - How the scheme will be promoted to parents
  - If the Personal Travel Budget option is taking up by some parents, then this will be more efficient than the Council arranging a taxi.
- 89 The Xtreme Group, which is a representative group of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:
- Will the budget be tailored to parents' availability and circumstances.
  - Will Personal Travel budgets increase with inflation, will they cover medical needs and will distance be a factor in determining the budget e.g. if someone lives further away from a school then they get a bigger budget.
- 90 Durham County Youth Council made the following comments:
- Suggest that parents are refunded for mileage.
- 91 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:
- This could have an impact on some families who claim benefits example universal credit, it could mean that payments would have to be declared as income which could cause difficulties with claims.
  - A lack of awareness by some parents of the availability of the scheme.

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

- 92 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.

- 93 There is an opportunity to make some 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.
- 94 The consultation sought views on:
- 95 **Some children receive free transport because a route to school has been formally assessed as unsafe. Do you agree or disagree that we should make routes safe wherever possible so that pupils can walk or cycle to school?**
- 96 70.2% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with this proposal, with 18.2% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. A further 11.7% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 97 When reviewing responses to this question from parents who receive free home to school transport due to unsafe walking routes, 58.8% strongly agreed/ agreed with the proposal. A further 29.4% of responses disagreed/strongly disagreed.
- 98 There were 151 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 57 Responses identified the child's safety on the route as a key factor in determining whether it is safe to walk.
  - 33 responses identified the benefits to the young people of walking/cycling and to the wider community of safe walking routes.
  - 25 Responses identified distance as a key factor alongside whether a route is safe to walk.

#### Feedback from Group Consultations

- 99 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.
- 100 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:
- Regarding unsafe routes members suggested that the service should be mindful of capital investment and ensure it was cost effective.

- 101 The Xtreme Group, which is a representative group of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:
- A lot of Young People travel out of area for school. How far is acceptable to walk/cycle?
- 102 Durham County Youth Council made the following comments:
- Supported walking routes to schools and to make these routes safer e.g. paths, cycle paths, lighting. This will support carbon zero agenda but there will be a large cost to do this.
  - There may be comparable cost to promoting walking routes as to putting on more transport.
  - Walking routes is a better long-term plan.
- 103 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:
- How often are walking assessments carried out and is there a time limit on when these routes should be assessed.
  - Need to ensure safe walking route assessments are up to date and if not, then re-assess the route.
- 104 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.
- 105 The consultation sought views on:
- 106 **Do you agree or disagree that the council should regularly review travel routes so that it is providing the most cost effective and environmentally friendly journeys to transport children to school?**
- 107 74.1% of responses agreed/strongly agreed with this proposal, with 9.2% of responses disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. A further 16.7% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 108 There were 100 free text comments received which expanded on the reasons for responses to the above question. The most prevalent themes were as follows:
- 22 Responses identified achieving value for money as a key factor for this proposal.

- 12 responses highlighted impact on the environment as a consideration.
- 12 Responses identified child safety as a consideration.
- 11 responses stated that reviews should be undertaken to provide the best possible service.

### Feedback from Group Consultations

109 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.

110 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:

- Volunteer drivers picking up one or two children would be more cost effective than public transport.

111 Durham County Youth Council made the following comments:

- Ensure travel routes are the most effective, that children are collected in right order and that there are more pick-ups.
- Not door to door any longer as journey time will increase.
- There are issues with transport queueing time at schools to get children into school (SEN).

112 Making Changes Together (MCT), which is a representative group of parents of young people with special educational needs made the following comments:

- Gave examples of taxis which travel through villages which are not full and could take more young people from the same village. Is this explored by council and could they not pick up extra children to reduce cost.

113 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:

- The lack of accessible vehicles forces the price up. Are you going to work/liaise with licensing to change the policy in order to save cost.
- DCC should consult with contractors to agree the best route and number of pupils carried around that area going to the same destination. An example was given where a transport provider asked DCC to consider combining two contracts into one.

- To save congestion at the schools, could we not stagger start and finish times? I'm only suggesting this at SEN schools at which vehicles queue. The pupils will still be off loaded from their vehicles in a timely manner, but it will aid the (management of) congestion. It may also allow operators to link contracts which should save money.

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

114 Due to challenges of increasing price inflation, contract costs, transport supply and market competition, it is 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. This will involve assessing opportunities to develop the supply base further and increase competition and deliver better value on routes and contracts.

115 The consultation sought views on:

116 **When reviewing and improving how we purchase Home to School Transport Services, what do you think are the key considerations that we should bear in mind?**

117 There were 9 responses to this question with the most frequent theme (3 responses) identifying quality as the key consideration in procuring transport. The next most frequent theme identified was the likelihood of cheaper contract prices if longer contract durations are offered (2 responses).

Feedback from Group Consultations

118 Consultation on the proposals took place with the stakeholder groups identified and written feedback received.

119 Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following comments:

- Referring to procurement of services members suggested engaging with community groups to come to an arrangement to share minibuses.
- Could special schools use their own buses and driver escort?
- Where possible use the same provider to attract economies of scale.

- Use/provision of school minibus with Durham County Council funding the maintenance and also paying for driver training. A non-teaching member of staff drives and would transport the children. The bus could be used for other school activities such as visits.

120 Relevant questions/points raised during the Online Consultation events were as follows:

- It is a difficult process for a new private hire or hackney carriage driver to gain their licence. This reduces the number of cars/minibuses that could be available.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

121 A full Equalities Impact assessment (EIA), updated with relevant consultation feedback is included in the Cabinet Report presented to the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and is included as a background paper. The EIA highlights potential impacts (both positive and negative) in relation to the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex (women) although several mitigations have been identified to remove or minimise potential negative impact.

### **Programme of Work Agreed by Cabinet**

122 Following the presentation of the consultation outcomes report to Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023, the following recommendations were agreed:

- (a) Agree a charge for the Standard and Maintained Concessionary scheme of £2.00 to align to the Bus Service Improvement Plan offer for the 2023/24 academic year;
- (b) Agree that in the event of the withdrawal of this fare in the future, that the annual charge for the concessionary schemes is aligned to commercial child travel fares;
- (c) Agree in principle to phase out the Maintained Concessionary scheme subject to further appraisals of the options available to achieve this and their associated impact on stakeholders and Transport arrangements, with a further report to Cabinet on the findings and recommendations;
- (d) Undertake a review of the needs of those individual children who are in receipt of single person transport and/or a passenger assistant to ensure that the most appropriate transport assistance relevant to their needs is provided;
- (e) Review the existing Personal Travel Budget Scheme and promote this as a travel option to parents;

- (f) Develop a Travel Training scheme in partnership with schools and parents;
- (g) Undertake a trial of Pickup Points for Children with SEND to assess the effectiveness of this option, which is developed in co-production with a small number of Special Schools and parents;
- (h) Review those routes which are currently assessed as unsafe to determine the feasibility of making them safe and also review the current configuration of school transport journeys with an initial focus on those schools which have the highest number of vehicles and/or cost associated with transporting pupils to their school;
- (i) Review the suggestions and alternative procurement options raised during the consultation, especially those which can have the most impact on efficiency, effectiveness, safety and environmental issues;
- (j) Receive reports on any future potential changes to Home to School Transport Policy arising from the recommended programme of work outlined in the report.

## **Conclusion**

- 123 Home to School Transport is a statutory service and 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, value for money and the impact on Council tax payers.
- 124 The consultation has highlighted a wide range of view and opinions about the Councils proposals which are summarised in this report, with full responses available in the Cabinet report dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023, which is included as a background paper.

## **Background Papers**

- [Home to School Transport Services Consultation Outcomes - Cabinet 14 June 2023](#)

## **Author**

Keith Forster

Tel: 03000 267396

---

## Appendix 1: Implications

---

### 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. Increasing the charge from the current level of £1.63 to £2.00 will generate additional income of circa £40,000 and reduce the level of subsidy from the Home to School Transport budget.

## **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 4 detailing potential impacts (both positive and negative) in relation to the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex (women). The assessment has been 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 Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## **Home to School Transport - Consultation Outcomes and Recommendations**

**22nd September 2023**



# Purpose

- To update CYP OSC on the:
  - Background to the Consultation
  - Consultation process and areas for consultation
  - Summary of feedback received
  - Proposed recommendations

# Background

- Over 9,000 children use Home to School Transport
- Over 1,000 contracts are in place with over 300 providers
- Contracts have increased in more expensive areas of provision:
  - ✓ SEND Contracts increasing from 456 in Sep 2021 to 482 in May 23
  - ✓ Children In Care Contracts from 55 in Sept 2021 to 71 in May 23
  - ✓ Post 16 Medical Contracts from 122 in Sept 2021 to 133 in May 23
- In external review, Durham identified as out of step with other Councils and more generous in their offer

## Financial Position 2018/19 – 22/23

	2018/19 (£m)	2019/20 (£m)	2020/21 (£m)	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)
<b>Budget</b>	9.933	11.308	14.731	16.482	19.576
<b>Outturn</b>	10.795	14.434	15.550	18.555	23.422
<b>Variance</b>	0.862	3.126	0.819	2.073	3.846

- The budget for 2023/24 has been increased to £29.1 million, a further increase of £9.6 million on 22/23 budget.

# Why are we overspending

- SEND Transport delivery, including the increased demand for Taxis and Passenger Assistants over recent years. Expenditure on SEND/other specialist transport represents 72% of the total expenditure on the service;
- 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 demands and expectations, including meeting the needs of a significantly increased number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans.

# Consultation

- Cabinet agreed to a Public consultation - **27 February 2023 and 12 April 2023**, which was promoted as follows:
  - The Council's web site, social media, other online tools.
  - Council Libraries and Access Points
  - Local press including local TV News, radio and newspaper articles
  - Briefings to senior leader school forums
  - Notification to Providers of Transport Services.
  - Voluntary Groups and Partnerships



# Who/How did we consult

- General Public/Parents/Transport Providers through 2 online events
- Online questionnaire
- Youth Council
- Extreme Group (young people with SEND)
- Making Changes Together (parents of young people with SEND)
- Primary, Secondary and Special School briefings to Heads
- CYPS OSC
- SEND Partnership
- Community Groups

# Consultation Areas, Feedback and Recommendations

## 324 responses to online questionnaire

	Frequency	%age
Parent/carer of a child/children with additional needs	88	27.8%
Parent/carer of a child/children without additional needs	157	49.7%
Child or young person with additional needs	1	0.3%
Child or young person without additional needs	9	2.8%
Resident (not parent/carer of a child using home to school transport)	33	10.4%
Educational professional/governor	28	8.9%
Transport provider	12	3.8%
Other	8	2.5%

# Consultation response from Parents

	Frequency	%age
<b>My child receives school transport which we pay for</b>	83	35.9%
<b>My child receives free school transport due to an unsafe walking route</b>	51	22.1%
<b>My child receives solo transport with a passenger assistant</b>	6	2.6%
<b>My child receives solo transport without a passenger assistant</b>	7	3.0%
<b>My child receives group transport with a passenger assistant</b>	34	14.7%
<b>My child receives group transport without a passenger assistant</b>	26	11.3%
<b>My child does not get home to school transport provided by the council</b>	46	19.9%

# Proposal 1 - Review the DCC Concessionary Scheme

## Consultation areas

- Increasing fares for the DCC concessionary schemes to help the Council meet more of the transport cost, including a proposed daily charge of £2.80 for a return journey
- Phasing out the DCC maintained concessionary scheme

## Summary of Consultation Responses

- Majority of responses did not support the proposals to charge a higher fare, charge £2.80 or phase out the maintained scheme.
- **Key Points** - affordability, cost of living and level of increase, impact on school attendance.

# Proposal 1 - Review the DCC Concessionary Scheme

## Recommendations

- Agree a charge for the Standard and Maintained Concessionary scheme of £2.00 to align to the Bus Service Improvement Plan offer for the 2023/24 academic year
- Agree that in the event of the withdrawal of this fare in the future, that the annual charge for the concessionary schemes is aligned to commercial child travel fares.
- Agree in principle to phase out the Maintained Concessionary scheme subject to further appraisals of the options available to achieve this and their associated impact on stakeholders and Transport arrangements, with a further report to Cabinet on the findings and recommendations

# Proposal 2 - Reviewing Single Person Transport and Passenger Assistants

## Consultation Areas

- The efficient and effective use of single person transport and passenger assistants to meet the transport needs of children

## Summary of Consultation Responses

- Majority of responses (over 70%) supported both of the proposals.
- **Key points** – children’s needs change over time, VFM, child safety and best interests.

## Recommendation

- Undertake a review of the needs of those individual children who are in receipt of single person transport and/or a passenger assistant to ensure that the most appropriate transport assistance relevant to their needs is provided;

# Proposal 3 - Independence

## Consultation Areas

- The introduction of an independent travel training scheme for children with SEND
- The introduction of use agreed pickup points for young people with SEND
- Simplifying personal travel budgets for parents of children with SEND and those in rural areas

## Summary of Consultation Responses

- Mixed responses, reflecting that proposals are appropriate for some Young People/Parents but not for others.
- **Key points** – promoting independence and lifelong skills, confidence and socialisation, but child safety, impact on parents/young person to be considered.



# Proposal 3 - Independence

## Recommendations

- Review the existing Personal Travel Budget Scheme and promote this as a travel option to parents.
- Develop a Travel Training scheme in partnership with schools and parents.
- Undertake a trial of Pickup Points for Children with SEND to assess the effectiveness of this option, which is developed in co-production with a small number of Special Schools and parents.

# Proposal 4 – Unsafe Routes/Route Review

## Consultation Areas

- A proposal to review unsafe walking routes to make them safe wherever possible so that pupils can walk or cycle to school?
- Review travel routes so that the most cost effective and environmentally friendly journeys to school are provided?

## Summary of Consultation Responses

- Strong Support for Proposals.
- **Key points** – promotes health and wellbeing, VFM, broader benefits for community / environment, but child safety, cost of improvements and distance are key factors.

# Proposal 4 – Unsafe Routes/Route Review

## Recommendations

- Review those routes which are currently assessed as unsafe to determine the feasibility of making them safe
- Review the current configuration of school transport journeys with an initial focus on those schools which have the highest number of vehicles and/or cost associated with transporting pupils to their school

# Proposal 5 – Procurement

## Consultation Area

- When reviewing and improving how we purchase Home to School Transport Services, what do you think are the key considerations that we should bear in mind?

## Recommendation

- Review the suggestions and alternative procurement options raised during the consultation, especially those which can have the most impact on efficiency, effectiveness, safety and environmental issues

# Next Steps

- The programme is being taken forward in accordance with the decisions of Cabinet.
- Feedback from the consultation is being considered in progressing the recommendations.

# Questions

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



22 September 2023

### Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2022-23

---

#### Report of Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services Councillor Mamie Simmons, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

#### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the draft Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report April 2022 – March 2023, for comment.
- 2 The Annual Report 2022-23 is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

#### Executive summary

- 3 Over previous years, a number of changes have been implemented to strengthen political and management oversight of the Corporate Parenting Panel and increase the voice of children and young people in our work. This continues to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for our young people.
- 4 The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's constitution and make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 5 This is the sixth Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel, following the changes to political oversight.

#### Recommendations

- 6 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the content of the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2023-23.

## **Background**

- 7 The terms of reference make specific reference that the Corporate Parenting Panel will prepare and provide an annual report that will be shared with Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- 8 In July 2021, Durham County Council were subject to a remote focused inspection led by Children's Services and Skills on behalf of Ofsted's work into how England's social care system delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the coronavirus pandemic.
- 9 The inspection identified a range of strengths and recognised that the service knows its children well, with Ofsted commenting that the self-assessment provided an accurate picture of children in care.
- 10 The processes in place to listen to the views of children and young people and to ensure their views positively impact service delivery were acknowledged. Inspectors were extremely complimentary about the Children in Care Council, having had the opportunity to meet representatives, to hear about their experiences and achievements.

## **Development of the Annual Report**

- 11 To ensure the voice of the child is reflected in the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel, young people from the Children in Care Council, supported by officers from the Partnerships Team and Investing in Children have an opportunity to develop the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Reports.
- 12 Young people consider the design, content and language of the Annual Report to ensure it is easy to read and understand.
- 13 To ensure we continue to raise the profile of the Corporate Parenting Panel, the development of the Annual Report retains a corporate format, whilst ensuring it uses language and design which is also appealing to young people.
- 14 The Annual Report is hosted on the Durham County Council website, Investing in Children website, and the Children in Care Council website.
- 15 The Annual Report includes information on:
  - (a) What a Corporate Parent is
  - (b) The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel
  - (c) The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference



- (d) Key performance data
- (e) Achievements during 2022/23
- (f) Priorities for 2023/24

## **Conclusion**

- 16 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report which provides oversight of the work undertaken during 2022-23, and the priorities for the year ahead.

### **Author:**

Rachel Farnham

Tel: 03000 266543

Jayne Watson

Tel: 03000 268371

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

The Corporate Parenting Panel's Terms of Reference form part of Durham County Council's Constitution.

### **Finance**

There are cost implications for design and print services, however the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report will primarily be shared by email, and will be hosted on the Children in Care Council, Investing in Children and Durham County Council websites to minimise printing and distribution costs.

### **Consultation**

Young people from the Children in Care Council have been involved in the development of the Annual Report. The consultation has been done in the main through meetings coordinated by Investing in Children.

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

Services are available to all children and young people in our care, in line with legal duties.

### **Climate Change**

There are no climate change implications

### **Human Rights**

Children and young people have been central to the development of the Annual Report to ensure that their voices are heard.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There are no crime and disorder implications.

### **Staffing**

There are no staffing implications.

### **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications.

### **Risk**

There are no risk implications.

### **Procurement**

There are no procurement implications.

---

**Appendix 2: Draft Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report  
2022-23**

---

Attached as a separate document.

This page is intentionally left blank



# County Durham Corporate Parenting Panel

Annual Report  
April 2022 – March 2023



# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Message from CPP Chair and CICC representatives</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>03</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>What is a corporate parent?</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>04</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>05</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>CPP responsibilities</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>05</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Updates against 2022/23 priorities</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>06</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Priorities for 2022-23</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>07</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Children in Care Council</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>08</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Care day 2023</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>09</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Independent Visitors</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>10</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Children with disabilities</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Achievements</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Fostering</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Children's homes</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>15</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Supporting Solutions Service</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>17</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Adoption</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>18</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Care leavers</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>19</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Health</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>21</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Virtual School</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>26</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Education/employment and training</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>27</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Aycliffe Secure Unit</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>29</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Key performance data</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>32</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Achievements</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>32</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Proud moments</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>34</u></a>

“

Working with the Corporate Parenting Panel continues to be a great experience. Every time I attend, the panel meetings it is amazing to see that the members who are all amazing and doing a great job, are really listening to young people - and more importantly taking action.

Seeing the steady progress being made across the council every month is amazing and I am so proud to represent the CICC along with Billie-Leigh. ”

**Luke**



# Message from chair and CICC representatives



Councillor Mamie Simmons  
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

As Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, I would like to thank everyone for their support and dedication during 2022-23.

Last year we were dealing with the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of services, both in County Durham and across the whole of England. Whilst we now live with Covid, there are many other pressures facing the service, including the cost of living crisis, the impact of the war in Ukraine on both goods and services as well as our commitment to help Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young people.

In Durham, colleagues and volunteers across our services have worked extremely hard to provide support to ensure that all children, young people and their carers received the best possible help, advice and guidance.

Our young people continue to demonstrate tremendous resilience, adapting to the world around them, and making us, as corporate parents extremely proud.

I am pleased to introduce the Corporate Parenting Panel’s sixth annual report, which outlines the work undertaken across the service to help us understand and respond to need, ensuring our young people have the best possible opportunities available to them.

**March 2023**



Councillor Michelle Walton  
Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

“

As a representative of the Children in Care Council on the Corporate Parent Panel, it has been empowering to have a place where I can bring my passion for bettering the lives of other young people. I feel like we are actually being heard in a society where mainly adults speak on behalf of you.

The council members and the managers are great at making the meeting feel like a safe space to talk about our ideas and have allowed us to push the boundaries a little of the traditional ways of feeding back to the members. In almost every meeting I am not only allowed, but lightly encouraged to be creative and present our ideas and what we have worked on in an unorthodox manner. All the members make me feel welcomed and despite it being a professional manner, the nature of what we talk about makes it a little personal, the boundary is never crossed.



However, I do feel that the Corporate Parents truly care about myself and the other Children in Care Council representative and want the very best for not only for us but all of Durham’s looked after children. The environment created makes me feel seen and that the councillors truly want to see me succeed in everything that I do whether that be in what we raise in the meeting or in my studies.

Our voices are valued here, and this is where young people can really make a difference for future children that may enter Durham’s care system. ”

**Billie-Leigh**

## What is a corporate parent?

When a child is unable to safely live at home and they come into the care of the local authority it is important that they are properly cared for, supported and loved. The term corporate parent means that everyone in the Local Authority has a responsibility to think about the children in our care in everything they do.

Being a corporate parent isn't just up to the Corporate Parenting Panel, everyone should be looking out for our children and young people, and every councillor and council employee has a role to play as the eyes and ears of the community.

Being a corporate parent means doing whatever we can to support young people in our care and our care leavers, to help them achieve their full potential and have the best possible outcomes. This sometimes means being a corporate grandparent too.



## Why are children in care?

Young people are looked after for a variety of reasons including neglect and abuse. They could also be in care if their parents are unable to look after them because of their own complex health needs or behaviours. Some young people have no parents to care for them, or they could be unaccompanied asylum seekers.

## Where are children in care?

Children and young people can be in care in a range of settings, including foster care, children's homes, supported lodgings, and secure accommodation – the council is corporate parent to all of them.

## Did you know?



Durham are leading discussions to establish a regional CPP Chair/Vice Chairs network



# Role of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

The CPP is a group that is part of the council, which is called a committee. It has 21 councillors as well as council officers. There are also 10 other members, including school representatives and young people's representatives to make sure there's a broad range of experience and knowledge and that children and young people are heard, and actively responded to.

Corporate parents have responsibility to act for the children and young people in our care as a parent would for their own child, and should ask three key questions:






## CPP responsibilities




There are a number of things which the CPP must do:

1. Make sure the Council acts as a good corporate parent to children and young people in care and care leavers, including:
  - Young people in children's homes, foster care and supported living situations
  - Young people placed for adoption or placed at home under care planning regulations
  - Young people in secure homes or in custody
2. Engage and listen to the views of children, young people and their carers.
3. Work in partnership with other agencies to make improvements for our children and young people in care.
4. Oversee the virtual school for looked after children and young people. For more information visit [www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtualschool](http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtualschool). A sub-group has been established to lead on this work.
5. Oversee Aycliffe Secure Services. Sub-groups have been established to lead on this work.

More information on the Corporate Parenting Panel can be found in the [constitution of Durham County Council](#)

## Updates against 2022-23 priorities

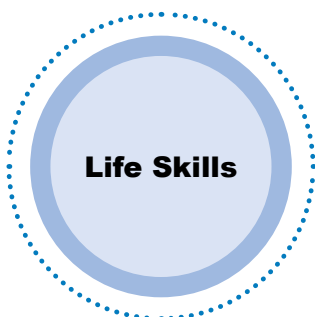
What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
<b>Personalised Care</b>	Every child has a care plan which explains how they need to be looked after and supported to get the best from their lives. This includes children and young people in all living situations and for older young people these plans are developed with them directly.	<p><b>Just OK</b></p>  <p>CiCC thought it was good that all young people had a care plan. They expressed each young person should have one. They thought care plans could be personalised to each young person so a plan is age appropriate and understandable so they are empowered to participate further allowing their direct voices to come through.</p>
<b>Staff in Children's Homes and Foster carers</b>	<p>All interviews for children's homes or foster carers now has a young person's panel.</p> <p>Staff training is supported by children's groups and voices (using videos etc)</p> <p>The progress of how this feels for young people and if it is making a difference is measured through the CICC feedback.</p>	<p><b>Just OK</b></p>  <p>CiCC members living in children's homes commented on being involved in staff interviews and that additional staff have been recruited to their homes. Support was also valued.</p> <p>CiCC members thought the Mockingbird model was a positive step for foster families. They also thought financial support for foster carers was important and should be considered particularly in school holidays.</p>
<b>Family time</b>	<p>Family time rooms for children whose circumstances are still in an assessment phase have been reviewed and some have been revamped. They remain unpopular with older children in particular and we are looking to develop a 'house' where more natural time as a family can take place.</p> <p>Children with plans of permanence have family time in a variety of community settings. We have reviewed the supervision of this family time and have removed as much as young people have said they are comfortable with. We are looking to progress this further with as many carers as possible supporting family time in a natural way as part of the household. (i.e. meeting a parent for a coffee while shopping, or going swimming, school events).</p>	<p><b>Happy</b></p>  <p>CiCC members really liked the idea of making Family Time more natural and some CiCC members explained this was happening.</p> <p>They thought a house for families to use would be a great approach to develop more natural family time for young people who needed support to see their families.</p>

What we said we would focus on	Where we are now	What young people think
<b>Broaden and increase attendance at CICC meetings</b>	<p>Work in this area has been difficult to progress and has been led by Investors in Children staff. The CICC continues to be a small group that does not represent the demographics of the CLA population.</p> <p>The care leavers scrutiny committee may choose to consider this as an action to explore.</p>	<p><b>Happy</b></p>  <p>CiCC members like the developments of CiCC road shows, care day 2023, attending foster care events and Artstops as approaches to widen participation.</p> <p>CiCC members would like to produce more surveys to widen participation and continue to look at ways to promote CiCC</p>
<b>Care Experienced Young Inspectors programme</b>	<p>The care leavers scrutiny committee is established and will determine the priority of this type of work as they have a wider remit to explore services to young people across the council.</p>	<p><b>Happy</b></p>  <p>CiCC members thought this was a good idea and older CiCC members have started to connect with it, however, they think it could involve more young people outside of CiCC.</p>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>All young people who attend college now receive free bus travel passes.</p> <p>Work progresses with the care leavers and COE group to look at ways that travel accessibility could be improved for young people in Durham.</p>	<p><b>Happy</b></p>  <p>Transport for young people at college was viewed really positively, but thought transport for care leavers could be developed further in line with personal circumstances.</p>

## Priorities for 2023-24

Each year, young people choose key priority areas that they would like the service and the Corporate Parenting Panel to focus on. It was agreed that the young people would identify key areas and share these with the CPP members at the joint CICC/ CPP meetings.

The following areas were identified by young people as initial ideas for 2023-24:



To increase the representative voice of the children in our care, the Children in Care Council will consider how children who don't attend CICC meetings will be given the opportunity to comment on these priority areas and say if they agree that they are the right ones for the services and the CPP to focus on for the year ahead.

## Children in Care Council (CICC)

The CICC is a group for children and young people who are care experienced in County Durham and is supported by Investing in Children. The CICC members meet monthly to talk about issues which are important to them, highlight what works and share stories of the support they have received. This forum is well established, and has recently been split into older and younger groups as the two age groups often had different priorities.

Senior managers from within Children and Young People's Services and elected members who are on the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) attend CICC meetings by invitation only as the young people wanted to determine their own agendas for these meetings.

More information on the CICC can be found at [www.durhamcicc.co.uk](http://www.durhamcicc.co.uk)

## Joint CICC/CPP meetings

In addition to the formal CPP meetings, children and young people from the CICC (supported by Investing in Children) host a joint meeting with the CPP every six months. The young people set the agenda for the meeting and invite members and officers of the CPP to attend to meet with the CICC.

These meetings are less formal than the CPP meeting and provide an opportunity for all of the young people who are part of the CICC to raise issues which are important to them and have discussions directly with members and officers of the CPP and have their ideas, suggestions and comments heard.

Feedback from the discussions is collated and key issues are presented at a formal CPP meeting, for further discussion. Work takes place to address these issues within the service, and feedback is provided to the CICC at the next joint meeting.

## Co-opted positions for CICC members

Two young people from the CICC have co-opted positions on the CPP providing panel representation from the CICC. They attend each meeting (supported by Investing in Children, and the DCC Participation Worker) to share feedback from the CICC.

In addition, the CICC have a standing item on each CPP agenda, where they provide feedback from CICC meetings, ensuring members of the CPP hear real views and feedback directly from the young people. The young people are involved in decision making within the CPP, and this feedback is shared with relevant leads to influence service decisions and developments as necessary.

## CICC Newsletters

Young people from the CICC produce newsletters, which are shared with partners across the service, with children, young people and their families and with the CPP.

You can find copies of the CICC newsletters at [www.durhamcicc.co.uk/cicc-newsletters](http://www.durhamcicc.co.uk/cicc-newsletters)



# Care day 2023

A range of activities took place to support Care Day 2023

- **The Children in Care Council hosted an event on 18 February.** Sky Hawkins 'The Word Bird' attended to provide the key note speech. Sky is an award-winning dyslexic poet and performer. Sky was raised in the UK's care system, and began writing poetry in her teens. All of the young people had a great day and look forward to next year's event.
- **Care Day Event in The Durham Room, County Hall, 22 February 2022.** The Children and Young People's Service held an event at County Hall for care day, inviting any young person aged 16+, their workers and all of our care leavers to come along. At the event artwork that has been put together by our young people was on display, demonstrating what young people feel the words "care experienced" means to them! The journey of the care leavers HUB from when it first opened was also showcased. Young people who are moving over to the care leavers service were encouraged to attend to meet Leaders, Managers, YPA's and other young people.
- **Care Leavers challenge.** Twelve people undertook the challenge, including Durham County Council Leadership team. Here are some of their quotes:

I just did one week and what an eye opener it was. I spent way too much money on the first day without really meaning to and had to be extra vigilant for the rest of the week but was extremely lucky to get some dog walking money in the challenge. I suddenly became very aware of how expensive everything is and how much you take for granted - the coffees from cafes on the go, a bag of crisps here, a bar of chocolate there etc and you just can't be frivolous at all. I spent a lot of time trying to squeeze an extra few pennies every time I went to the shops and it was quite soul destroying to be honest at what every day things just couldn't afford.

I sat under a blanket on an evening quite uncomfortable as heating was an unaffordable luxury (did let the kids have a plug in radiator in their bedrooms). I would say though the biggest hardship wasn't the food or heating (which is bad enough) it was not having any money to do anything at all. Couldn't afford the petrol to go anywhere (except work), didn't watch any of the usual TV packages (Amazon, Netflix etc). No going to the cinema, out for a bite to eat, a few drinks after work or a takeaway at home not even spending a couple of pounds having a coffee at the park. I felt quite isolated and if that was my life, long term I can imagine would feel very despondent and even depressed.

Not a challenge I would like to repeat but certainly glad I did it to get insight into how young people leaving care who are already at a disadvantage have to live.

**Personal Assistant NHS**

Didn't feel right having extra when my colleagues doing the challenge had not been so lucky and some had received a sanction. The experience has given me increased understanding and narrative when considering the needs of care experienced young people. On the afternoon I went to a meeting and everyone was interested in the challenge and how tough it had been. Raising awareness is important but more action is definitely required. Thank you for letting me take part.

**Designated Nurse – Children in Care**



# Independent Visitors

Did you know that any person in care (from primary school age, until you turn 18 years old) is entitled to an independent visitor. An independent visitor is a volunteer who can help with your mental health and wellbeing, help with social anxiety, and you can also plan trips and activities to do together. Ask your social worker for more information.

During 2022-23, the service received 70 referrals for an Independent Visitor, a small increase on the previous year but excellent evidence of the consistent need for support for young people in care. 50 young people were matched with Independent Visitors, and 33 matches concluded during the period. Matches conclude where a young person has left care, although the offer of support for those young people remains, some young people no longer want an Independent Visitor, or the Independent Visitor leaves the role. The service currently has 44 active matches.

The main impact of having an Independent Visitor is reported as an increase in confidence and self-esteem amongst young people. Developing independent skills is also reported as a significant outcome. Feedback from users of the Independent Visitor service is...

“ My Independent Visitor is my best friend. I don't know what I would do without them. I am leaving care soon and they have been a big support to me and will support me through my move. - **Young person** ”

“ The Independent Visitor sticks with me whether I have good days or bad days. I can have very difficult moments when I feel down but they listen to my concerns and frustrations, and this helps to make me feel better. - **Young Person** ”

“ The support and kindness shown by the Independent Visitors to both young children have been amazing during a difficult period. Both young people love going out with them'. - **Foster carer** ”

“ It is so positive to have a service like this in CYPS, that supports the work that social workers do but independent from core responsibilities that we have. Independent visitors can spend more time doing activities with the young person that supports the positive work that the team around the young person aims to achieve'. - **Social Worker** ”

“ The relationship with the young person is very intense, but also real fun. I am led by what they want to do but also try to ensure that they have the opportunity to talk about their issues whilst engaging in useful and fun activities. Such a positive experience!! - **Independent Visitor** ”

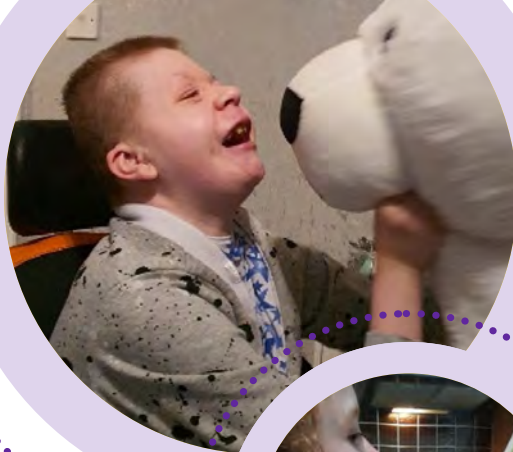
“ There is so much care and empathy shown to 'C' in their relationship with their Independent Visitor. We have also seen a positive change in the way 'C' manages their emotions and the way they build friendships with others. Great positive steps. - **Social Worker** ”

## Children with disabilities

There have been significant changes to services for CWD since 2019 and we now can see the great practice improvements for our children.

Which includes:

- Remodelling of the service to create a 0-18 CWD team
- The creation of the 14-25 Navigation team, which is based within the adults' social care service
- The CWD team has had additional investment in staff
- We now have clear processes, guidance and procedures for practitioners which includes a robust eligibility criteria
- A robust short break offer supported by our commissioning colleagues in the process of being created
- And a priority to champion the voice of the child in all our work with our families



## Durham County Council Children with disabilities team - All about us

Durham County Council's Children's Social Care are committed to delivering the very highest quality services to children and young people who have disabilities and their families. The Children with Disabilities Team is a specialist service for children and young people who are aged 0-18 years old.

Children and young people that meet the eligibility criteria for an assessment from the Children with Disabilities team will usually have their needs assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The Team is responsible for ensuring that all children and young people are safe, happy and thrive and become as independent as they possibly can be. In all our work with children and young people we want to provide the right service at the right time and ensure that wherever possible children are supported and kept safe primarily by their family and their network.

We have a statutory responsibility to provide and/or co-ordinate the provision of services to meet the assessed needs of children and young people with disabilities. We endeavour to put children and young people's needs at the heart of all we do. The provision of services to children and young people under the age of 18 with disabilities is delivered by the Children with Disabilities team, which is managed by Durham County Council's Children's Social Care.



## What our children with a disability and their families tell us we need to do more of and what we have done!

Ensure we have a voice

- Improve our voice, hear our wishes and feelings, know, and understand our day-to-day experiences.
- Access to advocacy via NYAS - we are passionate about encouraging parents to work with NYAS to ensure children's views are advocated.
- Use Mind of My Own Express and One App.
- We are using more creative ways to gather wishes and feelings including photos, social stories, picture exchange communication, signed supported English, Makaton and commissioned specialist signs when needed.
- Access to Young carers support for brothers and sisters. Alongside Parent Carers assessments.
- That our Independent Reviewing officer asks us what our wishes are and check everyone is doing their best for us.

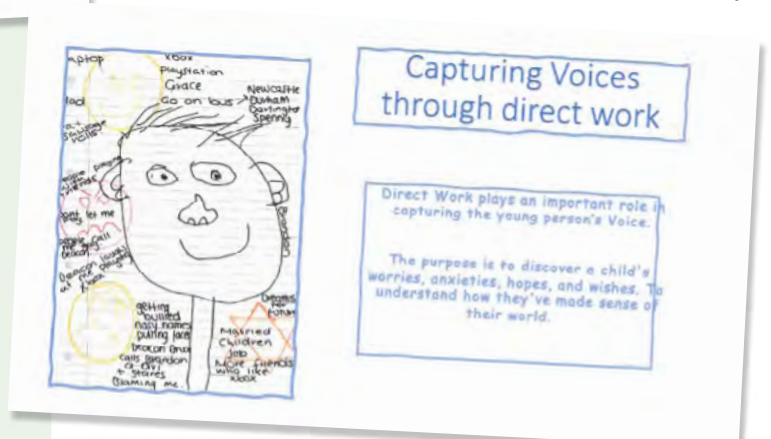
## That you know us well. When you can't help you help us to find someone who can

- Ensure that team culture promotes building good relationships with us, our families, and our carers.
- That we will where possible have the same social worker throughout our childhood.
- When you cannot help us as we do not meet the criteria you will endeavour to provide advice, support, and guidance to help to meet our needs.



## Ensure our needs are understood and regularly discussed by people who know us best

- We are visited regularly by our named social worker.
- Annual assessments focusing on what's working well for us and our families/carers, what we are worried about and what needs to happen to meet our needs.
- Ensuring we have a robust plan to meet our needs and/or keep us safe. That these are reviewed and updated regularly by us, our families, and our carers.
- Our parents/carers have access to carer's assessments.
- When we are ready to think about preparing for adulthood, we work closely with the Navigation team, they are colleagues in adults' services who can work when is most appropriate to support with the transition to adulthood. We recognise for all young people the transition from children to adults' services is a worrying time, and we work hard to ensure this is done in a planned way.





## Achievements

The CWD team achieved an Investing in children gold award as the award gives national recognition for actively including children and young people in dialogue that results in change for our children and their families. The team who shared lots of the lovely work our children and young people have done, and they have designed a new leaflet for the children with disabilities team. It involves hearing directly from children and young people how they have a voice and contribute to changes in the work of the CWD team.



Aimee is one of our social workers in our CWD team and she recently was filmed for the department for education to explain her role and to illustrate that our social workers play a vital role and help make key positive changes in our children's lives. – Here is the link so you can experience the passion the team have for their children and young people.

View Aimee's film here:

<https://twitter.com/educationgovuk/status/1637725774521171968?s=20>

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Within Durham we have a growing population of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. These young people have experienced human trafficking and exploitation during their travel to Durham and we need to support them to recover and to thrive in our communities. We have established a dedicated team to help them do so and for many we have been able to aid them through sport to build confidence and communication with each other and with staff. They meet regularly to play football and to cook and share food. These young people are some of the most vulnerable we have in our child looked after population.



## Fostering Services

Fostering services in Durham continue to provide family-based care of a high quality to children who cannot safely live at home. In Durham we have 368 fostering homes. 133 of these are with connected person foster carers and the remainder with carers who do not know the children but are available to offer a loving home for as long as required.

To recognise the work our foster carers do we have changed the way that we pay fostering fees with the introduction of a skills to foster model. This resulted in every carer receiving and increase in payments. We continue to look at ways in which we can improve our support to foster carers in Durham.

They are the engine of children's social care and the care they provide supports children to recover from harms suffered and aids them to return to live with their families or move into their adults lives when they are ready to do so.

We have a staying put scheme that makes sure that young people move from their fostering homes when they are ready to do so and that this isn't because of their age alone.

## Mockingbird Family Model

We have successfully launched our first mocking bird fostering constellations. This means that we have an experienced foster carer working with a group of other foster carers to make and extended fostering family. This helps the children and the adults when things are hard. They have the support of each other, and they have the ability to have sleep overs to give each other space if that's what is needed. They share fun events and build the relationships of an extended family.

We have a second hub due to be launched in the coming

months and will progress with this model of fostering to support foster carers to care for children who might otherwise not be able to manage in a family-based care setting.

## Fostering recruitment

We need lots more foster carers to make sure that when a child or young person needs a foster carer, we can choose the right one to meet their needs. To help us do this we have had a number of targeted campaigns take place across the year to increase the number of foster carers. Last year we launched our first TV advert. [Here's the most recent TV advert.](#)

## Did you know? ? ?

We have a group called 'M8s' that provides support for foster carers own children, if they have them. This gives an opportunity for the young people to meet others whose parents are foster carers, and to have fun whilst sharing their experiences.

## Mind of My Own App

To ensure children's voices are at the centre of what we do, we have several ways that we engage with them and in addition to our direct work, all young people are supported to access the Mind of My Own app. This enables young people to share their views, successes and any challenges with their social workers ahead of their reviews. The app also allows young people to contact their social worker if they have any worries or queries about anything at any time. Young people, for whom English is not their first language, can use the app in their own language, which are translated and sent to their workers.

## Foster Care Training

Young people support our foster carer training both for new foster carers and for those who have fostered for a while and are refreshing their training. This allows the training to be 'real' and for the young people to help foster carers understand how it feels from their perspective to be cared for in a fostering home.

## Foster Care awards

These awards recognise the outstanding achievements of foster carers, as well as their families who have welcomed children and young people into their homes and lives.

Last year we hosted the Foster Care awards at the Gala Theatre, Durham which was really successful but could only have limited numbers in actual attendance. This year we are planning an event to include as many foster carers as we can.

## Did you know? ? ?

Staying Put arrangements means that if a young person and their foster carer agree, the young person can continue to stay with their foster carers when they turn 18, even though they become a care leaver. This may be something a young person wants to do because they want support while they finish their education, or they might just want more time to make the transition to independence. They can stay with their foster carer until they are 21.



## Ofsted inspections in our residential children's homes

Children's home	The effectiveness of leaders and managers	How well children and young people are helped and protected	Overall experiences and progress of children and young people
<b>Park House</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>New Lea house</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>Orchard house</b>	Outstanding	Good	Good
<b>33 Newton drive</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>54 Blackgate East</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>Moorside</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>West Rainton</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>High Etherley</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>The Manse</b>	Good	Good	Good
<b>Hickstead</b>	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
<b>Hudson house</b>	Not Inspected	Not Inspected	Not Inspected

Information about Aycliffe Secure Centre is included in the ASC section.

We currently have eleven registered Children's Homes across the County offering residential care to children and young people. This could be support and care for young people who cannot live at home, or short respite breaks when children and young people with disabilities need to have a little time away from their family or carer. There have been many developments across the service, including strengthening the existing management teams, with Deputy managers in post and also a "grow your own" approach to recruit new workers with no experience of residential care. Furthermore, the homes are currently being revamped to ensure that they are homely and fit for purpose.

## Sufficiency

A number of new children's homes are being developed to ensure that as many children as possible live within County Durham and are able to maintain links with their schools, friends, families and hobbies. The new homes are different sizes (ranging from 1 to 3 places) so that children and young people with more complex needs can be cared for. An Edge of Care home is also being planned; this will offer short breaks and wider support to young people and their families to help them to remain living at home.

## Staying Close

This is similar to the staying put principles, when young people leave our children's homes they may still need the support of familiar people to help them settle and feel safe in their adult living arrangements, so we will look for accommodation options that are close to their former children's home so that they are able to pop in for advice and support, or to use laundry facilities, have a meal etc when they need to.

## NYAS

All children in care have access to independent advocacy services through the National Youth Advocacy Service.



## Regulation 44/elected members

Some of our elected members attend the Regulation 44 inspection visits alongside the NYAS inspectors on a quarterly basis ([more information on Reg 44 visits can be found here](#)). Posters of the inspectors are on display in the home, so that young people know who is visiting, and can identify them easily:

Home/Councillor	
<b>Framwellgate Moor, Durham</b> Cllr Mamie Simmons	
<b>Elderhirst, Meadowfield</b> Cllr Ken Robson	
<b>Maple House, ASC</b> Cllr Stacey Deinali	
<b>Coxhoe Hudson House,</b> Cllr Chris Varty	
<b>West Rainton</b> Cllr Bev Coult	
<b>High Etherley</b> Cllr Samantha Townsend	
<b>New Lea House, Stanley</b> Cllr Joyce Charlton	
<b>Orchard House, Sacriston</b> Cllr Cathy Hunt	
<b>Moorside, Spennymoor</b> Cllr Angela Sterling	
<b>Hickstead, Newton Aycliffe</b> Cllr Ken Robson	
<b>Park House, Sherburn</b> Cllr Jake Miller	

# Supporting Solutions Service

Supporting Solutions Service offers:

- Edge of care support, offering intensive interventions where there has been a relationship breakdown (age 11 plus support and minis support which is age 7 plus)
- Family Group conferences to support families to put in place a sustainable plan to support the young people.
- Support for young people who have been missing from home.
- Child Exploitation support and interventions.
- During 2022-23, 182 young people received support from the SSS 11 plus service, 126 of these were referred in 2022/23, whilst the other 56 had been referred prior to this.
- 135 young people who received support from SSS 11 plus service were able to remain in the care of their family and 10 young people were able to return to the care of their family after a period in care. 6 young people were supported to remain in their long-term placement.
- During 2022-223, 56 young people received support from the SSS minis service, 48 of these were referred in 2022/23, whilst the other 8 had been referred prior to this.
- 43 young people who received support from SSS minis service were able to remain in the care of their family. 11 young people were supported to remain in their long-term placement.
- Access to an out of hours bed for one night where there is a crisis situation. The crisis bed at The Nest was used on 55 occasions, for a total of 64 nights.
- 231 initial Family Group Conferences were completed in 2021/22; for 197 of these the plan supported the child/young person to remain with or return to the care of their family.
- The Erase child exploitation workers have supported 92 young people who were identified as high risk of criminal or sexual exploitation in 2021/22. When reviewed in April 2022 43 young people remained high risk, but for 49 young people their risks had reduced (26 to medium risk and 23 to low risk).
- 683 young people were reported missing in 2021/22, a total of 1992 missing episodes. This is an increase of over 80% on the previous year. Of the 1910 occasions where a Return Home Interview was offered 1417 were completed, and information shared with partners to inform risk reduction planning.

## Missing from home work

During 2022-23, 624 young people were reported missing, a total of 1965 missing episodes. This is a reduction of 7.5% of young people going missing and a reduction of 3% of the number of missing episodes to the previous year. 141 of these young people are looked after, totalling a number of 992 missing episodes. 356 of those are young people to have a Child in Need (CIN) or Child protection (CP) plan and are supported by social workers; a total of 1535 missing episodes. Of the 1508 occasions where a Return Home Interview (RHI) was offered, 1049 were accepted, completed, and information shared with partners to inform risk reduction planning. In comparison to the previous year, the multiagency work and support has helped decrease the number of missing episodes and young people going missing. Page 133

## Child Exploitation support and interventions

During 2022-23, the Erase child exploitation workers supported 54 young people who were identified as high risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE) or child sexual exploitation (CSE). When reviewed in April 2023 findings were that

- Initially 20 young people were identified as high risk of CSE. Four of these young people have now reduced to medium risk of CSE and 16 have reduced to low/no risk of CSE.
- Initially 33 young people were identified as high risk of CCE. Seven of these young people have now reduced to medium risk and 14 have reduced to low/no risk of CCE.
- Initially 1 young person was identified as high risk of CCE and CSE, they have now reduced to medium risk.

## Adoption

Adopt Coast to Coast was established as the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), and the launched virtually on 1 April 2021, with successfully established branding, as the go to agency for those interested in adoption, across the North East and Cumbria.

Adopt Coast to Coast is a partnership RAA, and is made up of the following two partners (spokes):

- Durham County Council
- Together for Children who deliver children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council

\*Until 31 March 2023, this also included Cumbria County Council.

Adopt Coast to Coast continues to work with partners to embed models of early permanence in Durham, for example 'Fostering for Adoption', and work across the partnership to develop the adoption support offer.

Adopt Coast to Coast's learning from marketing activity in 2022-23 highlighted the following:

- Real stories resonate with people
- Videos are engaged with the most
- Profiles of real children increases engagement
- Social media activity about post-order adoption support such as events significantly helps engagement with adopters and target audience
- Social media and digital activity support awareness raising
- Sponsored content with local publications is successful
- The website continues to be the biggest recruitment tool
- Targeted campaigns e.g. sibling adoption throughout the year works well
- Adopter 'type' specific recruitment activity is well received e.g. LGBTQ+ and single parent adopters

## DCC Adoption Service

This has been another very busy year for the adoption team in all areas.

Enquiries from people considering adoption have risen again with 267 being made this year compared to 216 in the previous year.

Twelve information sessions have been held via Teams and facilitated equally by Durham County

Council and Together For Children social workers, each undertaking six sessions. These sessions help to give people a better understanding of adoption in the early stages of their adoption journeys and helps to inform their decision making as to whether it is right for them. These sessions are not mandatory, however the three day information, counselling and preparation course and one day therapeutic parenting course are. These days are delivered after an application to be assessed has been accepted.

By the end of the last year 41 adoptive households were approved and 19 were in the application, assessment or on hold process.

43 Adoption Orders have been granted for DCC children within this period.

Adoption Panel has been held 27 times over this 12-month period. Panel is held fortnightly, and additional panels held when necessary to prevent delays for children. Three of the 27 panels held were additional panels. 58 matches for children/sibling groups with adopters and 42 adopter approvals were considered at these panels. The total number of DCC children matched was 65.

Early Permanence continues to be a key priority, as it allows children to experience a reduced number of care givers and moves allowing for stronger attachments to be formed much sooner.

94 children have been supported through successful 'assessments of need' completed by Social Workers within the Adoption team. Overall, 116 claims were made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) on behalf of children in need of therapeutic support relating to adoption issues. This is a total funding approved by the ASF of £398,320.20. Here's what one adopter had to say about their adoption experience.

*We found the adoption process so easy. Great introduction meeting and training. Great initial call from yourself around process and next steps as well as ongoing meetings to get the information needed together for panel.*

*You were a great help and provided guidance along each step.*

*I have told lots of friends who are considering adoption that the County Durham team are excellent, and it is nowhere near as scary as you believe. Even panel was fine.*

# Care Leavers

The care leavers service in Durham works with young people from the age of 16 when a young persons advisor is appointed to establish a relationship with a young person and assist the social worker in the development of the pathway plan into adult life.

The Durham County Council Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers has been developed, covering January 2022 to December 2024. It outlines our vision, and areas for action.

The strategy has a strong focus on learning from those who are care experienced to drive forward practice improvements in County Durham and help our young people to build strong relationships that will endure.

## Local Offer to Care Leavers

The Local Offer has been published on our website and gives details of how DCC will support young people with:

- Options about where they live
- Helping with money, benefits, and financial advice
- Looking after their health (physical, mental, and sexual); drug, alcohol and smoking cessation support; support about relationships.
- Education, Employment & Training

Care experienced young people have undertaken a research project to look at Durham's local offer, which included a trip to York Council to look at their care leavers offer. The research project benchmarked Durham against other regional and national local authorities local offers.

Moving forward, colleagues and young people from ten other Care Leavers services will visit Durham and vice versa. The ten Local Authorities will provide feedback on Durham's services in June 2022. Consideration is being given to hosting a conference to share this feedback, and what it means for us in Durham.

Durham compares well to other areas, however plans have been put in place to make our local offer even better, and the proposals will be presented to the Chief Executive Officer and DCCs Corporate Management Team.

We will include an update in next year's annual report, but some of the key things in the local offer are:

- Improving the quality of pathway plans
- Strengthening our corporate commitment to our care leavers
- Making sure our young people have a variety of suitable accommodation options
- Improving the health outcome of care leavers, following the impact of Covid
- Helping prepare our young people for adulthood, which does not mean 'independence' as we recognise that everyone needs support throughout their lives
- Improved coproduction

An action plan has also been developed for 2022/23 which outlines how we will do what we say we are going to do, and by when.



## Midwifery offer to care experienced young people

A meeting with community midwives has taken place to initiate conversations regarding the support on offer to care experienced young people who are parents, and what can be done to make this offer better. This has progressed to the development of sessions in the care leavers hub for care experienced parents and health professionals jointly. This helps to build relationships and trust.

## Supported lodgings

The supported lodgings team now sits within the fostering service. This helps the supported lodging carers receive support and training.

Supported lodgings provides a safe, supportive and friendly home environment for young people, aged between 16 and 25 years old, who are leaving care and do not want to live on their own. Supported lodgings providers give young people a key to their home, their own room, access to a bathroom, kitchen, and laundry facilities.

Each young person is different, but many need practical support and help with things like learning to cook, doing laundry, budgeting, attending appointments, or even to help them find a job, or access education and training.

Supported lodgings can be short term, or for up to two years, and in Durham we have several supported lodgings providers and always seek to recruit more.

## Care Leavers Hub

The care leavers hub was officially launched on 28 February 2022, by our care leavers. The hub is a safe space to engage with services and each other, and just a welcoming place to hang out, get warm, clean and fed. A programme of events has been developed for the hub for the year ahead by young people, including a job club, young parents group and session with arts and crafts and wellbeing groups.

There are plans to develop 2 more hubs in the next year and work to progress this has begun. It is hope that the care leaver service will operate entirely from hubs allowing office space as well as drop-in rooms and activity rooms for planned groups to take place. Young people are working to develop this model and it is hoped these will be managed by the care leaver group.



## Drive project



The project supports young people by providing driving lessons, up to the value of £500. The project pays for one lesson, the young person pays for the next lesson, and so on then the project pays for the first theory test and one practical test. This is available for care experienced young people aged 17+ and care leavers up to the age of 21 (25 if in full time education).

- From April 2022 to March 2023:
- 6 young people passed their driving test
- 2 young people passed their driving test whilst on the waiting list
- 3 young people passed their theory test



Please note Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) were dissolved in June 2022, and from **1 July 2022** the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) took over the responsibility for NHS functions and budgets across County Durham.

It is the responsibility of Durham County Council, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and commissioned health services to identify and address the unmet health needs of children who are in our care.

## Physical health

The ICB commission County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) to:care.

- Provide medical services
- Undertake initial health assessments (IHAs)
- Undertake review health assessments (RHAs) for those living out of the Local Authority boundary but within a 20-mile radius and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children placed in Durham.
- Complete health passports for those children aged 15 ½ years old and above.

Public Health commission Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT) to undertake RHAs for young people living within the Local Authority boundary.

Despite the increasing numbers of young people entering care IHAs and RHAs statutory compliance figures are commendable. Issues with IHA time breaches are generally due to external administration processes.

These health assessments result in individual health plans being developed which form, part of the young person's overall care plan.



## Table 1

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IHAs: Excludes unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

	Q1 Apr- June 22	Q2 July-Sept 22	Q3 Oct-Dec 22	Q4 Jan-Mar 23
<b>LA Indicator:</b> Coram BAAF paperwork and consent received from LA within 0-5 working days of child coming into care	<b>45</b> <b>(50%)</b>	<b>54</b> <b>(57%)</b>	<b>41</b> <b>(44%)</b>	<b>54</b> <b>(59%)</b>
<b>Statutory Indicator:</b> Of the number of Durham children coming into care in the quarter; number of children seen by a Paediatrician within 20 working days of coming into care	<b>66</b> <b>(72%)</b>	<b>60</b> <b>(64%)</b>	<b>64</b> <b>(67%)</b>	<b>53</b> <b>(58%)</b>
<b>CDDFT Indicator:</b> Number of children offered an IHA appointment by CDDFT within 15 working days of health receiving correctly completed paperwork and consent from Local Authority	<b>78</b> <b>(93%)</b>	<b>68</b> <b>(80%)</b>	<b>84</b> <b>(91%)</b>	<b>70</b> <b>(78%)</b>

## Table 2

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN IHAs – Data is presented separately as timeframes for receiving the correct paperwork within 5 working days from commencement of care is challenging, due to the external processes.

	Q1 Apr- June 22	Q2 July-Sept 22	Q3 Oct-Dec 22	Q4 Jan-Mar 23
Number of UASC coming into care in County Durham	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>
Number of UASC requiring IHA by CDDFT	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
B.1: Paperwork received within 5 working days from commencement of care (LA indicator) (% of 14)	<b>0</b> <b>(0%)</b>	<b>1</b> <b>(17%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(17%)</b>	<b>1</b> <b>(7%)</b>
B.2: IHA completed within 20 working days of commencement of care (statutory indicator) (% of 14)	<b>0</b> <b>(0%)</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0%)</b>	<b>3</b> <b>(25%)</b>	<b>3</b> <b>(21%)</b>

## Table 2 continued...

	Q1 Apr- June 22	Q2 July-Sept 22	Q3 Oct-Dec 22	Q4 Jan-Mar 23
B.3: First appointment offered within 20 working days of coming into care. (% of 14)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (25%)	2 (14%)
B.4: First appointment offered within 15 working days of receiving correct and complete paperwork (CDDFT Indicator) (% of 14)	2 (67%)	1 (20%)	8 (67%)	10 (71%)
Number of UASC requiring IHA by OOA Health Provider	1	2	7	5
C.1: Paperwork received within 5 working days from commencement of care (LA indicator) (% of 7)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	3 (43%)	0 (0%)
C.2: IHA completed within 20 working days of commencement of care (statutory indicator) (% of 5)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	1 (20%)
Number of UASC with IHA completed by Kent	3	2	4	2
Number of UASC awaiting confirmation of IHA completed by Kent	2	0	2	0

## Table 3

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS RHAs:

	Q1 Apr- June 22	Q2 July-Sept 22	Q3 Oct-Dec 22	Q4 Jan-Mar 23
<b>Number Due</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Number Returned within timescales</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Number Remaining outstanding</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Compliance within timescales</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>87%</b>

Increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has led to the adaptation of IHA documentation to ensure a full and comprehensive assessment is completed that reflects their health needs. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children typically require TB screening, screening for blood borne viruses and completion of the vaccination programme as a minimum. Due to no or minimal health information assessing health needs can be more complex. Further developments in the way services are delivered for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are to be explored in 2023/24.

The ICB has recruited two Designated Nurses for Children in Care 1.5 whole time equivalent, strengthening the commitment from the ICB for developing health services for Children in Care.

HDFT have developed and enhanced their care leavers offer with 2 of their Specialist Nurses Children in Care, attending the care leavers hub on a regular basis. Relationships have developed and the young people are approaching them for health support and information. In addition, they are developing links with the care leavers team and supporting care leavers via their YPAs.

Historically, requests for health passports from care leavers have been consistently low. To address this, there is a collaborative approach with local authority colleagues to promote health passports to young people to improve the uptake. CDDFT Children Looked After team have also started to proactively complete health passports for all care leavers; this is shared with the GP and stored in the primary care records so the young person can request access to it at any point in the future.

CDDFT have met with the Children in Care Council to update the language in RHA documentation which is being updated to reflect their views.

Health colleagues across the region (North East and Yorkshire) attended and contributed to the NHSE Care Experienced Virtual Conference

on 20th March 2023. The event saw over a 100 professional in attendance. Over this period primary care has received training on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, transitional care and the learning from the Leiland-James Corkill Safeguarding Practice Review.

The Designated Nurse for Children in Care has completed an audit with support from the LA Children in Care Operations Manager, looking at health outcomes following IHAs and RHAs. Key findings from the audit showed that the health assessments and health care plans are of a high quality with the majority of health assessments available for the Looked After Review meetings. Areas for improvements include IHAs and RHAs information and care plans are not routinely considered in looked after review meetings and health needs identified in the IHAs/RHAs are not reflected in the principle care plan. The IHAs/RHAs primary focus is the child's/young person physical health needs with little mention of emotional and mental health needs. Work has already commenced with IROs to discuss these findings and an action plan is being developed which will be over seen by the Children in Care Health Meeting.

The Children in Care Health Meeting has developed this year seeing good multiagency commitment to improving the health needs of our children in care. The group has developed a health improvement plan which is aligned to the Children in Care strategic plan.

Moving forward as an ICB Children in Care is one of the 4 priority areas in the Joint Forward Plan, (the ICB and its partner trusts have a duty to prepare a joint forward plan, to set out how they will arrange and/or provide NHS services to meet their populations physical and mental health needs). This is in the initial stages however it will be exciting to see the developments and opportunities of a system wide approach to health services for Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People.

## Mental health

At present the ICB commission Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) to provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to support young people with mental health difficulties (Tier 1-3).

NHS England provide in patient mental health services (Tier 4).



## Priorities for health moving forward include:

- Contribute to the development of the NHS Joint Forward Plan
- Continued support for the recruitment of foster carers
- Working with local authorities to augment information sharing processes
- Improving mental health outcomes for young people
- Work with the LA to ensure that the IHAs and RHAs are considered at the Looked After Review meeting and the Health Care Plan is added to the principle care plan.

## Joint work continues with Local Authority partners to:

- Facilitate the date of the first Looked After Review being communicated to the Foundation Trust to expedite a timely IHA appointment – this is a longstanding challenge for the LA to meet the statutory 5-day timeframe.
- Augment the information sharing pathways following a child entering care and relevant documentation is distributed to the Foundation Trust in a contemporaneous manner.
- Ensure all Children in Care have access to the clear-cut assessment and the outcomes are shared with the relevant professionals.
- To strengthen the links with the Designated Nurses and the LA Children's Homes.

## Health outcomes for children in care and those care experienced continue to improve:

- Continue to liaise with NHS England colleagues to ensure children in care are prioritised by dental practices across the region
- Ensure the health needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are met.
- Recognising the needs of care experienced patients in primary care.
- Recognising the needs of Children in Care who are reported missing.
- Increase compliance of Primary Care GP information to inform initial and review health assessments.
- Continuing to develop links with NHSE and Aycliffe Secure unit to support the needs of children who are compulsory accommodated.

## Full Circle Therapeutic Services

Full Circle is an established specialist, integrated therapeutic service for children who are dedicated to working with care experienced young people. They are part of Durham County Council and provide support to children and young people (and their families and carers), where the children have complex backgrounds and negative childhood experiences which are impacting in the here and now.

Full Circle is a social work team made up of therapeutically trained social workers employed by the Local Authority. They also have a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Nurse Specialist, who are employed via and have links with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) service within Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

Full Circle utilise a trauma and attachment informed approach to promote healing and assist placement stability by supporting the children's foster carers and adopters, social workers, residential staff, education staff and the child's care team to support the child's healing from complex trauma and abuse.

Although primarily an in-house provision for Durham County Council, therapeutic support from the Full Circle can be commissioned by other local authorities who have children placed in our area, to extend the offer to children living in Durham. The income from this goes back into children's services to with support service provision.



## Virtual School

As of July 2022, there were 676 Durham looked after children of statutory school age:

- 47.5% primary/52.5% secondary.
- 80.5% County Durham schools/19.5% out of County schools, which is an increase of 0.5% from the previous year.
- School attendance for the whole looked after cohort was 92%, almost 3% better than the previous year.
- Suspensions remain low at 5% (34 children)
- Two young people were permanently excluded.
- 53% had an identified special educational need (SEN), which is an increase of 4% from the previous year.
  - 23% are supported by an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
  - 30% had a school SEN Support Plan, an increase of 2% from the previous year.
  - Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) were the primary need for 31% of primary aged children, a decrease of 8% and 55% of secondary aged children, an increase of 4% against last year.

The Virtual School are proactive with SEN to ensure young people are known, and that interventions are available for schools to access as early as possible. If a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is moved out of the Local Authority area to have their care needs met, it is important that Durham retain the plan for that child until an appropriate setting has been found. In Durham, every child who is looked after who has an EHCP now has an identified SEND Caseworker as well as their PEP Caseworker.

- For 2021/22 examinations our young people returned to formal examinations. Despite a significant number of the young people in this cohort attending Special Schools and not following a GCSE curriculum, results remained above the National level for CLA in 2019; the last cohort to have sat formal GCSE examinations. English grades were roughly in line with those achieved by the Durham CLA cohort in 2019, with Maths remaining above both National and Durham CLA in the same year.

- For 2021/22 children did sit their Key Stage 2 SAT's Outcomes this year are below those achieved in 2019 for Durham CLA, which we expect is in part due to the disrupted learning experience of this cohort. Reading is above the National CLA outcomes from 2019. This cohort will be tracked closely in PEP meetings as they move into Secondary education, with a focus on academic gaps.

## Virtual School Sub group

The Corporate Parenting Panel's vice chair is Cllr Michelle Walton, who provides challenge to the Virtual School. They have an oversight of the support offered to CLA of Statutory School Age and an understanding of the additional work focusing on Early Years and Post 16.

## Education fun fund

The Virtual School transferred £5,000 PP+ money to the CICC for an Education Fun Fund project. This enabled them to continue the project from last year.

Young people from the CICC set up the project, and developed an application process whereby young people can apply for up to £150 for non-educational items, which would not typically be funded in this way for example, sport and exercise equipment, boxing lessons, art and craft supplies, instruments and music lessons etc.

Young people from the CICC contributed to the Durham CLA Education Policy which was shared with all schools in September 2021. This sets out expectations for successful working with CLA.

Post 16 young people attending further education colleges continued to be part of the government pilot where they have received PP+ funding for another financial year. This has supported them to access the wider college life and has encouraged good attendance. A Mentor was employed to provide additional pastoral support.

## Emotional Wellbeing

As part of our focus on emotional wellbeing and the identified need of SEMH being a strong factor when identifying special education needs of CLA we have continued to raise awareness in all schools and settings of the impact of early trauma and insecure attachment on behaviour and learning and have supported schools to review policies and implement change. We have developed a strong offer to schools and settings to support the emotional wellbeing of CLA and the therapeutic offer through Full Circle.

More information on our virtual school is available here [www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtualschool](http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamvirtualschool)

A range of support is provided to support Care Leavers to progress into education, employment and training.

### DurhamWorks Programme for Schools

DurhamWorks Programme for Schools provides support for Children Looked After, to help them to make a successful progression from Year 11 into post 16 education, employment and training. Children Looked After can access individual careers guidance; participate in group based activities focused around themes such as transition support, motivation, and work related learning; as well as receive one-to-one mentoring support.

### Workplaces Project

A new Workplaces Project will be commencing during 2023-24, whereby Children Looked After in Years 10 and Year 12, will have opportunities to gain a valuable insight into the world of work and find out about the skills and aptitudes that employers value through bespoke visits to employer premises. Children Looked After will learn about specific employment sectors, different job roles within those sectors, as well as recruitment processes. They will also spend time with employees to find out about their pathways into work, in order to show them that employment is an achievable goal.

### DurhamWorks

Care Leavers aged 16-24 who are NEET, are supported by DurhamWorks to enable them to progress into and remain in education, employment or training. The programme is led by Durham County Council and is delivered in conjunction with partner organisations.

Care Leavers who are engaged with DurhamWorks receive transition support, the opportunity to obtain English and maths qualifications, as well access to a range of learning provision and activities to support their progression into education, employment or training. There is a focus on securing employment outcomes for young people within a defined timeframe and, to this end, employer engagement activity is a key feature of the programme. Since January 2022, DurhamWorks has supported 1,763 unemployed young people, of whom 145 have been Care Leavers.

## Sessional Employment Programme

A Sessional Employment Programme provides Care Leavers with the opportunity of paid work experience within Durham County Council. Work placements are identified which meet the talents, interests, and aspirations of each individual Care Leaver. A Sessional Employment Co-ordinator collaborates with Young People's Advisers, Human Resources colleagues, as well as Service Managers to deliver the programme.

Care Leavers can be in education, employment, training, or NEET to access Sessional Employment and work placements are paid at the rate of the Durham Living Wage. Examples of placements undertaken include:

- Farming in a protected landscape with North Pennines AONB: this placement coincided with a young person's qualification in agriculture at college.
- DurhamWorks: upon completion of a placement with DurhamWorks, a young person subsequently secured a support worker role for young people with disabilities.
- Human Resources: a young person undertook a placement to complement their degree course at university.
- Mechanics: a young person accessed a work placement to enhance their qualification at college.
- Data: a young person completed a placement with DurhamWorks data team in preparation for starting a new role as an Intelligence Analyst with Durham County Council.
- Brickwork: a young person accessed a placement during the summer after completing a brickwork qualification at college, in order to enhance their employment prospects.
- Investing in Children: a young person accessed a placement outside of Durham County Council through links with Investing in Children. This has led to the young person being offered employment, supported by a DurhamWorks employer grant.
- Peterlee Leisure Centre: a young person undertook a placement as a gym assistant with Peterlee Leisure Centre.

## Durham County Council Apprenticeships

Support was provided to 10 Care Leavers to apply for an Apprenticeship vacancy as part of the annual recruitment activity undertaken by Durham County Council. Of these, 4 young people were successful, 3 of whom commenced their Apprenticeships in September 2022. The other successful candidate decided to go to college instead of taking up their offer of an Apprenticeship.

Overall, the current number of Care Leavers employed by Durham County Council as Apprentices is 5. Discussions are taking place with Human Resources to link the Sessional Employment Placements Programme to Durham County Council Apprenticeship recruitment as a potential progression route in 2023.

## Pupil Premium Plus Pilot Scheme

Durham County Council is one of 30 Local Authorities that successfully bid to take part in a six month Pupil Premium Plus Pilot Scheme to support Care Leavers in academic years 12 and 13 who were attending a Further Education College. The aim of the pilot was to support sustained participation in learning by providing Pupil Premium Plus funding in a similar way to how additional funding is provided to school age Children Looked After.

Durham County Council utilised the funding to appoint a dedicated adviser whose role is to support a caseload of Care Leavers who are enrolled at a Further Education College, as well as provide a 'Keep In College' weekly cash incentive of £20 per week to Care Leavers with over 80% authorised attendance.

The initial Pupil Premium Pilot scheme ended in May 2022 and supported 52 Care Leavers who attended 14 Further Education Colleges. An evaluation showed that the Pupil Premium Pilot Scheme was well received by all Care Leavers who participated, as well as their carers. The consensus was that the additional £20 per week was an incentive for Care Leavers to remain in college. The scheme also enabled them to experience social activities in a way that they may not have been able to do otherwise.

Durham County Council has received further Pupil Premium Plus funding from November 2022 through to the end of the 2022-23 academic year. The scheme is being delivered in the same manner, with a cohort of 76 Care Leavers attending 14 different Further Education Colleges.

## Bus Pass Incentive

Anytime Travel top ups to existing bus passes were issued to Care Leavers who were attending one of the four Further Education Colleges in County Durham (Bishop Auckland College, Derwentside College, East Durham College, New College Durham). Bus passes were provided by either Arriva or Go North East travel companies and were valid for evenings, weekends and holiday periods up until the end of the summer term at college.

A survey undertaken with Care Leavers who received an 'anytime travel' top up showed that they used their enhanced bus pass to meet friends from their Further Education College during evenings and weekends. It was also used to access part time employment, alongside college study. Some Care Leavers reported an increase in confidence in using public transport to travel to different places, in addition to their Further Education College. A similar 'anytime travel' top up incentive has been provided during the 2022-23 academic year.

## Higher Education

A Young Persons Adviser supports Care Leavers who are studying at a University. This role involves preparing Care Leavers for their transition into Higher Education, liaising with universities to ensure Care Leavers have access to available support, as well as keeping in touch and visiting Care Leavers at their places of learning.

All information is available on the [DurhamWorks website](#)



# Aycliffe Secure Centre

## Our Mission Statement

“ Through developing and investing in our staff and infrastructure, Aycliffe secure centre will continue to provide each young person with a safe, secure, caring home and school. Encouraging and motivating each young person to be the best they can be in an environment they can enjoy. ”

Aycliffe Secure Centre provides secure homes and an onsite school for up to 34 young people: up to 8 young people who are sentenced or remanded by the Youth Custody Service and 26 young people who are looked after for their own safety or others safety. They are placed with us under section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989 and are commission by Local Authorities. We also look after young people under PACE in order to prevent young people being kept in police custody overnight.

The building and furnishing of our Transition Home, Maple House is completed, and we are awaiting registration in the very near future.

Over this last year we have been gradually increasing our occupancy of young people and staffing levels following a Covid19 recovery model. This has included “re-opening” Auckland House on 20 June 2022. We have prioritised recruitment of staff over this period and have a Senior Management working group as this is one of our key priorities to not only recruit the right staff but retain them. We have developed ways in which to support staff including a Listening Service, staff recognition schemes and also enhanced training and buddying and mentoring systems.

The philosophy of the centre is that of “Exceptional Parenting” underpinned by an integrated model of trauma informed care. We have continued to be an active part of the National SECURE STAIRS framework and received our second annual review post the 5-year pilot which continued to highlight the exceptional work and support offered to young people and staff alike. Through this trauma informed care young people understand their journey and work to build confidence, positive self-esteem, and resilience. Young people have enhanced multi-agency care and support and have been encouraged to have a significant voice and have been part of the mantra “no decision about me without me.”

The introduction of Character Education in the curriculum and rolled out across the centre has helped build Motivation, Resilience, Respect and Self Awareness in our young people.



## Inspection and monitoring at Aycliffe

As a secure children’s home, we have two unannounced inspections every year, with the full unannounced Inspection in Autumn 2022 that was judged as **Good Overall with Outstanding in Health**.

The opening line was,

“Children enjoy positive experiences and make good progress in the home. For some children, their experiences are life changing.”

In February 2023, Aycliffe had its Assurance Inspection, and it was acknowledged that all recommendations and requirements from the previous inspection were fully implemented and there were no causes for concern.

One child said about staff, “they’ve kept me alive, and they’ve made sure I’m okay. I know they care.”

Over this last year we have continued with our recovery model and have used lessons learnt from our Covid19 experience to shape and develop the centre.

**The four key priorities within our Strategic Development Plan are;**

**Staff** - An exciting place to work that invests in staff and offers opportunity and development

**Care** – Provide trauma Informed care and offer outstanding levels of multi-disciplinary care

**Environment** - All 6 Homes home open, vibrant and thriving within the centre

**Stability** – Explore the changing landscape of childcare and ensure Aycliffe remains a market leader

## Some of the activity over this year includes:

- The centre has continued to make progress against objectives within its Strategic Plan April 2022 – March 2025. The Senior Management team have met several times to consider the key objectives for the forthcoming years. Consultation with the workforce was a key factor in having a plan everyone believed and bought into. Alongside this feedback from re-connection meetings and the Enabling Environments (EE) baseline assessment are being undertaken. Further consultation with the wider workforce will be sought in order to work within the philosophy of EE.
- Continued roll-out of the SECURE STAIRS framework and work is underway with national leads to determine how connections to other settings are maintained including a focus support group for buddying secure children's homes. Fundamentally SECURE STAIRS is fully embedded within the centre.
- To further embed the use of ClearCare throughout the centre. The system has been in place for over a year and is well embedded across the centre. Further review will be undertaken to identify any needs in terms of training or staff support, as well as gathering feedback regarding recording practices, workflow and reporting tools. Work is being undertaken on the dedicated Maple House site, with 'go live' date planned to coincide with the opening of the home. The centre has moved to phase 2 of the implementation plan in the early part of 2023. This will include exploring use of the young person's interface, expanding recording of house processes such as safety and security checks, and exploring further use of the system within school.
- SystmOne implementation within the residential service to enable electronic logging of admin of medication. There have been unexpected delays in this area, however the centre is now at the training phase including training 'superusers' within each house team to support the systems application.



- Further implementation of the Education Development Plan, including observational walkarounds, have been completed.
- Further implement the findings of the Tri-annual Buildings and Facilities Inspection (November 2021). The centre has a comprehensive action plan which is being progressed.
- Upgraded technology within meeting rooms. The meeting rooms have been fully upgraded, ensuring that hybrid working can take place. This is being used successfully for internal and external meetings e.g., partnership and Multi Agency Team Around the Child meetings.



- Continued development of the young people's participation workstream. Significant progress is made within this workstream including co-production of developments within the centre.
- Continue to implement the recruitment and retention plan, ensuring that the workforce is fully staffed, and that staff are well supported and developed in line with their role and supporting skills enhancement and succession planning. Significant progress and development has been made in this area. The appointment of a workforce development officer to co-ordinate and support recruitment and also to develop a retention plan.
- We have further promoted and ensured that regular time is protected to enable staff meetings and reflective practice session to take place to allow staff to feel a sense of team, aid good quality communication and collaborative decision making. Alongside this being able to create safe spaces for staff to feel able to share thoughts, views, and feelings in a supportive environment. This time has been protected for all teams across the centre as it continues to be recognised that this is essential for strong and effective team working and morale. In addition, team away days were facilitated in this period, with all teams having their own input around focus/activities. This allowed time for reflection and celebration.
- The Reopening of Auckland House to provide further placements for young people who are referred to the national Welfare Hub and move forward from the impact of Covid 19 on the workforce. Auckland House was re-opened on the 20 June 2022; occupancy is gradually being increased in line with staffing levels.



## Key performance data 2022-23

- There were 1068 children in care at the end of March 2023. This is higher than last year, however our rate of children in care per 10,000 children in County Durham remains lower than in the North East and our Statistical Neighbours.
- The National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children started last year and there are now 59 currently looked after by Durham County Council
- 68 children were adopted in 2022/23. This equates to 18% of all children leaving care which is higher than in England and the North East in 2021/22.
- A similar proportion of children in care in Durham are in a foster placement to our comparators (71% compared to 70% in England and 71% in our statistical neighbours in 2021/22).
- Around a quarter of our children in care are placed outside of County Durham, but the majority are within neighbouring local authority areas. Often closer to their home than if placed in other areas of the county. This continues to be consistently lower than in our comparators.
- We continue to experience significant placement pressures which has led to an increase in children having 3 or more placement moves and long-term stability for some of our children aged under 16 who have been in care for more than 2.5 years.
- We have seen an increase in the number of children in care reported as missing alongside the number of missing episodes, with some children regularly reported as 'missing'. Multi-agency work is ongoing with Police and other partner agencies to monitor, understand and address this.
- Performance in relation to our care leavers remains positive in relation to accommodation suitability and education, employment and training remains above or at benchmarks.
- Educational attainment data is included in Virtual School and EET sections.

## Achievements

### IIC Membership Award

The membership award gives organisations national recognition for the good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue that results in change.

At present, 15 Durham County Council Services have an active IIC Membership Award, which recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice across Children's Services.

### Peer mentoring

Young people continue to undertake the training to become peer mentors. IIC and the CICC are working with DCC staff to ensure that the young people taking part in the programme have the support that they need to make sure they feel safe and know what to do with any information that is shared or disclosed during these sessions. The peer mentor programme is being implemented slowly to ensure all plans and support are in place.

### Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) work

A document explaining the role of the IRO has been developed with young people from the CICC. This will be sent out with the invites for the review meeting so that young people know who their IRO is, how to contact them, and what will happen at their meeting.

The young people have also developed this animation which explains the role of an IRO

[www.youtube.com/embed/GEM-w-x7xtc](https://www.youtube.com/embed/GEM-w-x7xtc)



## Social worker profiles

It was suggested by young people that social workers (and Full Circle/CAMHS workers) provide profiles of themselves so that young people know a little bit about them e.g. if they have children, favourite foods, movies they like etc as well as their work contacts and a picture of themselves.

## Language

We continue to have regular discussions about the language we use, and as a result of this some changes have been made based on young people's suggestions e.g.

- Young people did not like the word 'placement' so as well as considering where and how we use this, our 'placement team' has been renamed and is now called our 'home finding' team.
- Disruption meetings are also now referred to as 'next chapter' meetings.

## Good Luck cards

We realised that exam times can bring a lot of pressure to young people, and thought it would be nice to send a good luck card to our young people who are due to sit theirs. The message inside read:

“  
**‘Good luck in your exams.  
Be proud of what you can achieve.  
We are proud of you.  
With best wishes from Durham Corporate Parents’**  
”

Young people fed back that they really appreciated this, and it is something we have committed to do annually moving forward.



## Proud moments



In response to young people telling us that they sometimes faced stigma and discrimination, agreement was made by the Corporate Parenting Panel that proud moments would be shared at each meeting to highlight young people's achievements and successes - no matter how big or small.

Some of our proud moments include;

- The Service Manager for Children and Young People spoke of the good progress made by a young person who had recently moved back into the county and required a different approach to their care. They had settled well and were engaging in education and growing in confidence in their new environment. She spoke of how pleased she was to see the young person thriving and paid tribute to the staff who had gone to great lengths to work as a team to understand and respond to the needs of the young person.
- A group of asylum seeking young people formed a football team, comprising young people of various nationalities who despite their language barriers, were communicating with each other through their shared passion for football. It is heart-warming to see the young people enjoying themselves and encouraging other care experienced young people and care leavers to develop football teams, in the hope that this will lead to the establishment of a football league in the future. A flyer has been developed to promote the football teams.
- Caitlyn and Luke, our young people's co-opted reps from the CICC were offered places at University. Caitlyn will study social work, whilst Luke will study business.
- One young person who had gone to great lengths to ensure the facilities at the Care Leaver's Hub were at their best for the visit by the Ofsted inspectors, was praised. The young person had acted of their own volition to ensure the inspectors received a warm welcome.
- The Service Manager, spoke of her pride at a young person who had made a concerted effort to engage in employment after initially showing some reluctance. The young person had secured voluntary work in retail which led to the opportunity to study for a level 2 retail qualification, and the young person is now looking forward to a positive future.
- The Head of Children's Social Care informed the Panel of a ringing endorsement of the quality of care provided by a new foster care couple, which had been received from a Children's Guardian. The Guardian praised the new foster carers saying they had the competence of foster carers with years of experience, adding that their warmth, attention and child-centred home environment had led to a significant positive change for the children in their care.
- Staff caring for a young person, approaching the age of 18 spoke of their pride in them. Despite some very challenging times, they are flourishing in their transition and wholeheartedly embracing the changes ahead with positivity.
- The Practice Lead spoke of how immensely proud she was to see a positive change in a young person who had previously struggled to engage. The Panel heard that the young person was making a real effort to work with the Virtual School and participate in education and focus on a positive future.
- Praise also came for a care leaver who showed great maturity and strength of character in their efforts to challenge the current situation to achieve the housing accommodation outcome that she believed she deserved for herself and her child.
- A care leaver who moved into a home of their own as part of the 'staying close' pilot, made excellent progress, staying in touch with the key workers at their previous children's home who provided assistance and companionship as the young person gradually adjusted to the transition. One of the workers leaves her dog with the young person to provide company for them throughout the day.
- A young person with disabilities was thrilled to be selected to star in the TV programme 'Saturday Mash Up' to fulfil their dream of becoming a police officer for a day.
- Another young person with disabilities is hoping to go on a holiday abroad and they have been offered the opportunity to prepare for the flight by using a flight simulator to overcome their fear of flying.
- A young person has been selected to join the Royal Navy and they paid tribute to their foster family for all their support.

- A young person resident in a children's home who previously had anger management issues had benefited from the long-term support provided by their Independent Visitor. The support helped the young person to address their issues, to feel more positive about their future and engage in education. Furthermore, the young person is showing empathy and is keen to help others with their welfare.
- A Councillor expressed pride at the young people and carers who had attended an event held at Durham Town Hall, where their artwork was on display.
- The Practice Lead read a letter from a care experienced young person to their social worker, which provided testament to their special relationship. The 'thank you' letter gave a very moving account of how much the social worker meant to the young person, who thanked the social worker for their selflessness, thoughtfulness, patience and empathy. The young person explained how these qualities had helped them to feel safe enough to have hope for the future, to take each day as it comes and had ultimately changed their life for the better. The young person concluded the letter by saying they hoped they had made their social worker proud. The Practice Lead spoke of the positive impact of these words from the young person and how much the social worker valued the sentiments.
- A young person whose behaviour had tested staff on occasions, had been accepted onto a training course which had proved to be a turning-point for them, and they were beginning to look to their future with new-found optimism. The young person was positively engaging with staff, had volunteered to decorate the Christmas tree and had discreetly bought Christmas presents for staff. The Practice Lead commented on how pleased and proud staff were to see the young person's positive attitude and their kindness had meant a great deal to the staff involved.
- The Panel paid tribute to the young people who contribute to the work of the Fostering Panel and thanked them for all their hard work and the value they bring to the work, through sharing their experiences.
- Tribute was made to the children and young people who were participating in their own

decision making, understanding the positive and negative impacts of their choices, accepting responsibility for their actions and making good decisions as a consequence.

- Luke's commitment to supporting children looked after and care leavers in the work he does in addition to his contribution to the Corporate Parenting Panel and alongside his studies, was praised. It was noted that Luke attends regular meetings with the Chief Executive to discuss what more the Council can do for young people in care and care leavers. The Panel commended Luke's commitment to championing the care community.
- A young person who had previously been in the care of Durham County Council, is now working as a Young Person's Advisor with plans to train as a Social Worker. The young person was progressing well and spoke very positively of their care experience whilst in Durham.
- The panel shared their pride when a Service Manager spoke about the progress of a teenager who was new to care. The young person had engaged well with staff and experts to receive help and during a recent Ofsted visit, they spoke to inspectors about how much they valued the care they received.
- Members of the CPP were delighted to receive a progress update on Caitlyn, who was a Co-opted rep from the CICC, and who is now in her first year of a social work degree. She achieved 75% in her first assignments, which is equivalent to a first class degree.
- The Mockingbird fostering hub supported a young person when their main carer was admitted to hospital. The young person, who has learning difficulties, had settled well in the care of another foster carer in the hub and had benefited from the familiarity which had helped to maintain routines. The young person said that they felt really safe and stayed positive while their carer was away.
- Some Councillors have committed to running a race to raise funds for the CICC.
- Finally, the young people are proud of the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel, who continues to donate 'corporate grandparent' gifts of hand-knitted baby clothes, for those of our young people who have children of their own.

 [Countydurhampartnership@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Countydurhampartnership@durham.gov.uk)





## Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

22 September 2023



### Children and Young People's Services – Final Outturn Revenue and Capital Outturn 2022/23

## Report of Paul Darby Corporate Director of Resources

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details of the final outturn position for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year.

### Executive summary

- 2 The revenue outturn for 2022/23 was a cash limit overspend of £14.252 million for the year, representing circa 9.8% of the total net revenue budget for CYPS. This compares to a forecast cash limit overspend at quarter three of £13.832 million.
- 3 The final position takes into account sums outside the cash limit, including redundancy costs which are met from the corporate reserve, capital accounting entries and use of / contributions to earmarked reserves. Inflationary pressures on energy (£0.102 million) and transport contract prices (£3.000 million) have been excluded from the cash limit outturn. In addition, the 2022/23 pay award costs of £2.380 million have also been excluded from the cash limit outturn.
- 4 Other costs outside the cash limit including central support, accommodation costs, capital entries and additional items funded via corporate contingencies totalling £18.751 million have also been excluded.
- 5 The outturn position includes overspends within Head of Social Care (£13.930 million), Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (£0.358 million) and Central Charges (£24,000) budgets and underspends within Education and Skills of £38,000 and Operational Support of £23,000.
- 6 The council's financial procedure rules state that where a service groupings cash limit reserve is in deficit, the relevant service is required to make savings/ underspends the following year to bring the reserve

back into balance. In this case, given the financial pressures and issues facing CYPS a further transfer from general reserves has been actioned this year end to retain the CYPS cash limit reserve at zero.

### Recommendation(s)

- 7 Members of Overview and Scrutiny committee are requested to:
- (a) note the Children and Young People’s Services overall revenue position;

### Background

- 8 The County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2022/23 at its meeting on 23 February 2022. These budgets have since been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers, and budget re-profiling between years as well as corporately recognised budget pressures.
- 9 The original Children and Young People’s Services revenue budget has been revised to incorporate various permanent and temporary budget adjustments as summarised in the table below:

	Transfers in	Transfers out
Permanent changes	£1.730	-£0.312
Temporary changes	£1.430	£0
<b>Total changes</b>	<b>£3.160</b>	<b>-£0.312</b>
<b>Net budget change</b>	<b>£2.848</b>	

- 10 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2022/23 and show:
- (a) the approved annual budget;
- (b) the actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council’s financial management system;
- (c) the variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
- (d) for the Children and Young People’s Services revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

## Revenue Outturn

- 11 The revenue outturn for 2022/23 was a cash limit overspend of £14.252 million for the year, representing circa 9.8% of the total net revenue budget for CYPS. This compares to a forecast cash limit overspend at quarter three of £13.832 million.
- 12 The table below compares the forecast outturn with the budget by Head of Service. A further table is shown at Appendix 2 analysing the position by subjective analysis (i.e. type of expense).

Head of Service	Revised Annual Budget £million	Final Outturn £million	Variance £million	OCL £million	Pay Award £million	Inflation Pressures £million	Cash Limit Variance £million
Head of Social Care	82.015	98.120	16.105	-0.497	-1.660	-0.019	13.929
EHIVC	6.368	7.935	1.567	-0.509	-0.625	-0.073	0.360
Education and Skills	38.838	45.526	6.688	-3.362	-0.113	-3.252	-0.039
Operational Support	1.915	2.178	0.263	-0.245	-0.041	0	-0.023
Central Charges	15.977	14.477	-1.500	1.530	-0.001	-0.004	0.025
HoSC Excluded	0.049	0.049	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>145.162</b>	<b>168.285</b>	<b>23.123</b>	<b>-3.083</b>	<b>-2.440</b>	<b>-3.348</b>	<b>14.252</b>

- 13 The final position takes into account sums outside the cash limit, including redundancy costs which are met from the corporate reserve, capital accounting entries and use of / contributions to earmarked reserves. Inflationary pressures on energy (£0.102 million) and transport contract prices (£3.000 million) have been excluded from the cash limit outturn. In addition, the 2022/23 pay award costs of have also been excluded from the cash limit outturn.
- 14 Other costs outside the cash limit including central support, accommodation costs, capital entries and additional items funded via corporate contingencies have also been excluded.
- 15 The outturn position includes overspends within Head of Social Care (£13.930 million), Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (£0.358 million) and Central Charges (£24,000) budgets and underspends within Education and Skills of £38,000 and Operational Support of £23,000. Further details are shown below:
- (a) The final outturn against the Head of Social Care budget is an overspend of £13.930 million. The main factor being an overspend of £15.247 million against the budget for placements for children looked after, which compares to a forecast overspend of £13.786 million in this area at quarter three.

- (b) As at 31 March 2023 there were 1,067 Children Looked After, which continues a trend of growth in demand in this area as illustrated in the table below:

Date	Number of CLA
March 2022	982
June 2022	983
September 2022	1,028
December 2022	1,034
March 2023	1,067

- (c) The pressure on the budget in Children's Social Care has been evident for a number of years, as the number of children in the care system has increased significantly and their needs have continued to become more complex.
- (d) Underspends of circa £1.300 million across other Social Care budgets partially offset the overspend position on the placement budget and these relate mainly to employee budgets as a result of vacant posts within the service.
- (e) Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children (EHIVC) had an overspend of £0.358 million against budget.
- (f) The major factor relates to Aycliffe Secure Centre where there was a cash limit overspend of £1.448 million. This overspend is after full use of Aycliffe Secure Centre's earmarked reserve of £0.403 million.
- (g) The overspend is largely attributable to a shortfall of £1.526 million against income budgets where it has not been possible to achieve the previously forecast level of occupancy due to difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff. An additional £1.013 million shortfall against income budget is attributable to Maple House, which could not be opened as scheduled due to delays in construction works and Ofsted registration.
- (h) The shortfall against budgeted income is partially offset by reduced staffing costs, which were £0.434 million under budget for the main centre and £0.553 million under budget for Maple House.
- (i) There is also an overspend of £0.291 million against premises budgets as a result of a combination of high energy costs and repair work to buildings.

- (j) The remaining service areas in EHIVC had an underspend of £1.040 million, mainly attributable to underspends against employee budgets of £1.240 million, due to the management of vacant posts, and £0.144 million as a result of low usage of remand beds. These underspends are partially offset by a shortfall against of SLA income budgets.
- (k) Education had an underspend of £38,000 after taking account of inflationary pressures and the pay award adjustment of £3.118 million which was funded corporately.
- (l) The Home to School Transport budget overspend was £3.846 million, which is an improvement on the £4.971 million overspend anticipated at quarter three, which has a CYPs cash limit impact of £0.846 million after taking account of £3.000 million as an agreed inflationary pressure to be funded corporately.
- (m) There was a shortfall of £0.797 million against income budgets for Service Level Agreements with schools and a shortfall of £0.549 million against income budgets relating to various income streams, such as Durham Leadership Centre lettings and course fee income.
- (n) These overspends were however offset by a saving of £1.104 million against employee budgets, which is largely as a result of staffing restructures in Education Durham, implemented from 1 September 2022. There were also vacancies across the wider Education service that contributed to this underspend.
- (o) Further savings against budget of £1.126 million have been achieved against various areas across the service, including in Early Years Service where there is an underspend of £0.504 million against activity and sustainability budgets, in Education Durham as a result of additional one-off income streams of £0.413 million and an underspend of £0.187 million against pension liability budgets across the service.
- (p) Operational Support is reporting an underspend of £23,000 against employee budgets due to vacancies within the service.
- (q) Central Charges is reporting an overspend of £24,000 relating to an increase in the provision for bad debt.

16 In arriving at the outturn position and further to the quarter three forecast of outturn report, a net £2.800 million relating to contributions to and from reserves has been excluded from the cash limit outturn.

- 17 Taking the outturn position into account, including the transfers to/from reserves in year, the cash limit reserve balance for CYPS is a £14.252 million deficit as at 31 March 2023
- 18 The council's financial procedure rules state that where a service groupings cash limit reserve is in deficit, the relevant service is required to make savings/ underspends the following year to bring the reserve back into balance. In this case, given the financial pressures and issues facing CYPS a further transfer from general reserves has been actioned this year end to retain the CYPS cash limit reserve at zero.

### Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools

- 19 The council currently maintains 161 schools, including nursery, primary, secondary, special schools, and a single Alternative Provision (AP) school. The AP school is for pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- 20 As with the council, during 2022/23 schools faced a range of unfunded inflationary pressures, for pay awards and energy costs which have outstripped the initial budget planning assumptions.
- 21 The final position for all maintained schools for 2022/23 is shown in the following table:

<b>Subjective Budget Heading</b>	<b>Original</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£ million</b>	<b>£ million</b>	<b>£ million</b>
Employees	203.927	215.355	11.428
Premises	13.485	16.822	3.337
Transport	2.001	2.732	0.731
Supplies	35.948	38.624	2.676
Central Support & Other	0.000	0.325	0.325
DRF	0.000	0.512	0.512
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>255.361</b>	<b>274.370</b>	<b>19.009</b>
Income	-62.014	-82.121	-20.107
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>193.347</b>	<b>192.249</b>	<b>-1.098</b>
Budget share	186.026	191.826	5.800
<b>Use of reserves</b>	<b>7.321</b>	<b>0.423</b>	<b>-6.898</b>
Balance at 31 March 2022	28.652	28.652	-
<b>Balance at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>21.331</b>	<b>28.229</b>	<b>-6.898</b>

- 22 The final position has improved since the quarter three forecasts, when schools were forecasting, they would need to use £7.746 million of their

reserves. The final position has resulted in the use £0.423 million of reserves, which is an improvement on the original budget figure of £6.898 million.

- 23 The original budget included five schools which have converted to academy during the financial year. One of these schools was The Durham Academy (formerly Durham Community Business College) which had a deficit of £0.662 million upon conversion. The other four schools converted with combined reserves totalling £0.790 million.
- 24 The use of £0.423 million reserves within the year relates to the 161 schools maintained as at 31 March 2023.
- 25 The positive change in the financial position between the quarter three forecast and final outturn reflects:
  - (a) Significant work carried out by council teams working closely with schools to provide advice and guidance on the management of budgets and to support action that schools have taken to balance their financial position in year;
  - (b) Energy cost being below previously forecasted amounts;
  - (c) Additional levels of income received by schools from fees and charges;
  - (d) Interest income of circa £0.700 million across all schools with a surplus balance. This income was higher than the level received in previous years due to higher interest rates;
  - (e) Additional grant income received by schools
- 26 The position at individual school level shows that 11 of the 161 maintained schools are in a deficit position at the end of the financial year. The cumulative deficit for these 11 schools is £3.371 million, of which £2.777 million relates to Wellfield School which converted to academy status on 1 June 2023 and was previously the subject of a Cabinet report in March 2023. The deficit at the point of transfer will be written off by utilising the earmarked Schools Reserve, which has a balance of £5.244 million at 31 March 2023.
- 27 Whilst the overall use of reserves for the 161 maintained schools was £0.423 million, the majority of schools needed to use some reserves to balance their financial position in 2022/23. This is illustrated in the tables below:

Number Schools	Nursery	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Use of reserves	8	81	2	3	94
Contribution to	3	55	3	6	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>161</b>
Use of reserves	-0.174	-2.930	-0.368	-0.838	-4.309
Contribution to	0.130	1.899	0.891	0.970	3.886
<b>Net (Use) of or</b>	<b>-0.044</b>	<b>-1.031</b>	<b>0.523</b>	<b>0.132</b>	<b>-0.423</b>

- 28 Given that 94 schools (circa 60%) needed to cumulatively use £4.309 million of reserves during the 2022/23 financial year to balance their financial position, it is not surprising that the budget setting process for 2023/24 was challenging for many schools.
- 29 Schools can set a budget with an in-year deficit, providing that they have enough surplus retained balances (reserves) carried forward to do so without this resulting in the school having a net deficit balance at the end of the financial year.
- 30 Where a school cannot do this and therefore wishes to set a licensed deficit, it must have permission from the council's Corporate Director of Resources – the statutory Responsible Financial Officer (s.151 officer) to do so.
- 31 There are six schools that have set a licensed deficit budget for 2023/24 and these are detailed below:

School	Reserve balance at 31-Mar-23	Forecast reserve balance at 31-Mar-24	Forecast reserve balance at 31-Mar-25
Oxclose Nursery School	-£65,633	-£33,722	£43,283
Peases West Primary School	-£58,758	-£32,011	£30,587
Ferryhill Station Primary	-£26,896	-£24,050	-£19,500
Horndale Infant School	-£17,238	-£17,001	-£11,850
Langley Moor Nursery	£4,119	-£16,663	£1,118
The Meadows	-£290,722	-£92,772	£20,728
<b>Total</b>	<b>-£455,128</b>	<b>-£216,219</b>	<b>-£64,366</b>



## Dedicated Schools Grant Centrally Retained Block

32 The 2022/23 outturn for centrally retained DSG budgets was a net overspend of £1.346 million as shown in the table below:

DSG Block	Budget £ million	Outturn £ million	Over / (Under) Spend £ million
High Needs	76.418	76.210	-0.208
Early Years	31.847	31.781	-0.066
Central Schools Services	2.910	2.824	-0.086
De-delegated	0.283	0.569	0.286
Schools	-	1.420	1.420
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>111.458</b>	<b>111.411</b>	<b>1.346</b>

- 33 The underspend on the High Needs Block is in contrast to the quarter three forecast, where a £0.798 million overspend was anticipated and relates to the following main areas:
- (a) An overspend of £1.509 million against the budget for Special School provision, which reflects the provision of additional places across schools in Durham in excess of those provided for in the budget;
  - (b) An underspend of £0.898 million against central service budgets of £4.266 million, including an underspend of £0.709 million against the Investment Support Fund budget of £1.077 million;
  - (c) An underspend of £0.473 million against the budget of £10.723 million for provision in independent and non-maintained special schools and further education colleges; and
  - (d) An underspend of £0.364 million against the budget of £17.728 million for provision in mainstream settings.
- 34 This is the first year that there has been an underspend against the High Needs Block allocation in Durham since 2015/16. The underspend will be used to reduce the cumulative deficit position.
- 35 A five-year plan for high needs block funding and expenditure, including reducing the accumulated deficit by the end of the five-year period, was approved by Cabinet in April 2022.
- 36 This plan is now being updated to reflect the final outturn position and changes to future year forecasts, which are being developed as part of the DfE's Delivering Better Value Programme (DBV).

- 37 A review of the current programme of work is also taking place in the autumn and this follows a workshop with Schools Forum in the autumn.
- 38 The underspend of £66,000 on the Early Years Block relates to a combination of the following three elements:
- (a) Additional funding received in 2022/23, relating to 2021/22 of £0.594 million;
  - (b) The planned distribution of £0.846 million of accumulated Early Years Block Reserve to Early Years providers, which was distributed in the Autumn term, to Early Years settings on the basis of children accessing Early Years Pupil Premium and eligible two-year-olds; and
  - (c) An in-year underspend of £0.291 million largely relating to two-year-old entitlements where the DSG allocation has exceeded current funded hours.
- 39 Local authorities DSG Early Years National Funding Formula is calculated on the basis of the number of hours children are taking up during census week in the January prior to the beginning of the financial year (in this instance January 2022), creating an assumption of uptake. Therefore, the grant received is based on indicative hours.
- 40 This is followed by an adjustment in the following July (in this case July 2023) should there be any movement in the number of places reported in the next annual census (January 2023 census). This is to cover any additional expenditure where the number of eligible children increase beyond the original census allocation (for example new settings or an increase in numbers at an original setting) or conversely a reduction due to the closure of settings or changes to the demographics.
- 41 Any variations are picked up by DfE in the proceeding census and may result in an adjustment in the form of clawback of unused funding or additional payments for new childcare places.
- 42 The underspend of £86,000 on the Central Schools Service Block relates to an underspend against the Copyright Licences budget.
- 43 The overspend of £0.285 million on de-delegated funding relates to a planned use of reserves of £0.217 million in relation to behavioural support services, £34,000 of carried forward school contingencies expenditure and £34,000 under recovery of Trade Union duties expenditure.

- 44 The overspend of £1.393 million on the schools' block relates to a planned use of reserves in relation to school funding formula from previous years.
- 45 The impact of the outturn on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table.

<b>DSG Reserves</b>	<b>High Needs Block (Unusable Reserve) £ million</b>	<b>Early Years Block £ million</b>	<b>Schools Block £ million</b>	<b>Total DSG £ million</b>
<b>Balance as at 1 April 2022</b>	<b>-8.843</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>2.401</b>	<b>-5.786</b>
2021/22 Early Years Block Adjustment	-	0.594	-	0.594
Use (-) / Contribution in 2022/23	0.208	-0.528	-1.620	-1.940
<b>Transfer to DSG Adjustment Account</b>	<b>8.635</b>	<b>-0.722</b>	<b>-0.781</b>	<b>7.132</b>
<b>Balance as at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>

- 46 The overall DSG reserve was in deficit of £5.786 million at the start of the financial year, largely as a result of the accumulated deficit position in relation to the High Needs Block. The overall deficit position has increased to £7.132 million at the end of the financial year.
- 47 The movement is the net effect of planned reserves usage in relation to the school funding formula and de-delegated sums of £1.593 million, offset by underspends against the high needs and early years blocks.
- 48 Statutory override regulations now require the local authority to assess the deficit across the schools' budget. Under these regulations, it is not permissible to split up the schools' budget into its component parts, and report a surplus on the schools, central services or early years block against the deficit on the high needs block. As, collectively there was an overspend on DSG, reserve balances in their totality require transfer to the DSG unusable reserve.
- 49 The sums shown in the table above under Early Years Block and Schools Block, which previously would have been available for use have now been aligned to unusable reserves to reduce the HNB deficit position. This has the effect of artificially increasing the schools' reserves position at year end.

## **Capital Programme**

- 50 The capital programme has been revised to take into account budget reprofiled from the previous financial year following the final accounts for that year and to take account of any revisions in the current year.

51 The revised budget is presented at Appendix 3 together with actual expenditure.

**Author(s)**

David Watchman, Finance Manager

Tel: 03000 268573

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital projected outturn position.

### **Consultation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

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

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Climate Change**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Human Rights**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Staffing**

There are no implications associated with this report. Any over or under spending against the employee budgets are disclosed within the report.

### **Accommodation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Risk**

The management of risk is intrinsic to good budgetary control. This report forms an important part of the governance arrangements within Children and Young People's Services. Through routine / regular monitoring of budgets and continual re-forecasting to year end the service grouping can ensure that it manages its finances within the cash envelope allocated to it.

### **Procurement**

There are no implications associated with this report

## Appendix 2: CYPS final outturn by subjective analysis

Subjective Heading	Revised Annual Budget £million	Outturn £million	Variance £million	OCL £million	Pay Award £million	Inflationary Pressures £million	Contingencies £million	Cash Limit Variance £million
Employees	88.266	84.233	-4.033	1.769	-2.440			-4.704
Premises	4.187	6.248	2.061	-0.808		-0.102	-0.374	0.777
Transport	26.162	30.596	4.434			-3.000		1.434
Supplies and Services	10.713	15.718	5.005				-0.005	5.000
Third Party Payments	45.061	63.394	18.333					18.333
Transfer Payments	1.573	3.318	1.745					1.745
Capital	20.482	24.974	4.492	-4.491				0.001
Central Support	26.792	31.411	4.619	-0.132				4.487
DRF	0.023	0.011	-0.012					-0.012
<b>Expenditure sub-total</b>	<b>223.259</b>	<b>259.903</b>	<b>36.644</b>	<b>-3.662</b>	<b>-2.440</b>	<b>-3.102</b>	<b>-0.379</b>	<b>27.061</b>
Grant	-22.766	-30.296	-7.530					-7.530
Contributions	-4.155	-5.119	-0.964					-0.964
Sales Summary	-0.071	-0.059	0.012					0.012
Charges	-17.156	-20.635	-3.479					-3.479
Rents	-0.316	-0.396	-0.080				0.132	0.052
Recharges	-33.608	-34.048	-0.440					-0.440
Other Income	-0.025	-1.061	-1.036	0.575				-0.461
<b>Income sub-total</b>	<b>-78.097</b>	<b>-91.614</b>	<b>-13.517</b>	<b>0.575</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.132</b>	<b>-12.810</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>145.162</b>	<b>168.289</b>	<b>23.127</b>	<b>-3.087</b>	<b>-2.440</b>	<b>-3.102</b>	<b>-0.247</b>	<b>14.252</b>

### Appendix 3: CYPS Capital final outturn

<b>CYPS</b>	<b>2022/23 Capital Budget £million</b>	<b>2022/23 Final Outturn £million</b>	<b>2022/23 Variance £million</b>	<b>2023/24 Budget £million</b>	<b>2024/25 Budget £million</b>	<b>2025/26 Budget £million</b>	<b>Total Capital Prog £million</b>
Childrens Care	0.802	0.648	-0.153	3.255	1.800	0	5.703
Planning & Service Strategy	0.597	0.343	-0.254	0.588	0.077	0	1.009
EHIVC (inc. SEN Capital)	0.015	0.006	-0.009	11.446	0	0	11.452
Education-School Devolved Capital	2.624	3.614	0.990	5.410	1.100	0	10.123
Education-School Related	12.846	10.598	-2.247	63.591	33.804	9.081	117.074
Secure Services	1.164	1.000	-0.165	0.744	0	0	1.744
<b>CYPS Total</b>	<b>18.048</b>	<b>16.210</b>	<b>-1.839</b>	<b>85.033</b>	<b>36.781</b>	<b>9.081</b>	<b>147.105</b>

This page is intentionally left blank



# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

22 September 2023



## Children and Young People's Services – Quarter 1: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24

### Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details of the forecast outturn position for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position at the end of June 2023.

#### Executive summary

- 2 The 2023/24 projected outturn for CYPS, based upon the position to 30 June 2023 is a cash limit overspend of £5.078 million, representing a 3% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS.
- 3 The cash limit outturn projection excludes forecast use of / contributions to earmarked reserves and items outside the cash limit such as redundancy costs which are met from corporate reserves. Forecast reductions in energy costs (£0.170 million), inflationary increases re Fostering Allowances (£0.590 million) and the 2023/24 Chief Officer and Apprentice pay award (£60,000) have been excluded from the cash limit outturn position.
- 4 Also excluded is £0.150 million forecasted expenditure on surplus school sites, which is to be funded from general contingencies, and £0.720 million relating to Aycliffe Secure Service unrealised income which is also being funded corporately.
- 5 The forecast outturn position includes overspends within Head of Social Care of £5.836 million and in Education and Skills of £0.220 million, with underspends forecast within CYPS Central of £0.668 million and Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.309 million.
- 6 Details of the reasons for under and overspending against relevant budget heads are disclosed in the report.

- 7 The service capital budget 2023/24 is £91.450 million with expenditure of £4.803 million as at the end June 2023.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 8 Members of Overview and Scrutiny committee are requested to are requested to:
- (a) note the Children and Young People's Services overall revenue position;

### **Background**

- 9 The County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2023/24 at its meeting on 22 February 2023. These budgets have since been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers, and budget re-profiling between years as well as corporately recognised budget pressures.
- 10 The table below compares the forecast outturn with the budget by Head of Service. A further table is shown at Appendix 2 analysing the position by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense).
- 11 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2022/23 and show:
- (a) the approved annual budget;
  - (b) the actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
  - (c) the variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
  - (d) for the Children and Young People's Services revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

### **Revenue Outturn**

- 12 The 2023/24 projected outturn for CYPS, based upon the position to 30 June 2023 is a cash limit overspend of £5.078 million, representing a 3% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS.
- 13 The table below compares the forecast outturn with the budget by Head of Service. A further table is shown at Appendix 2 analysing the position by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense).

Head of Service	Revised Annual Budget £million	Forecast Outturn £million	Variance £million	Pay award £million	Inflation Pressures / Use of Contingencies £million	Cash Limit Variance £million
Head of Social Care	101.441	107.899	6.458	-0.032	-0.590	5.836
EHIVC	5.656	5.749	0.093	-0.011	-0.391	-0.309
Education and Skills	41.428	41.750	0.322	-0.007	-0.095	0.220
Operational Support	2.455	2.458	0.003	-0.003	0	0
Central Charges	17.421	16.760	-0.661	-0.007	0	-0.668
HoSC Excluded	0.049	0.049	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>168.450</b>	<b>174.665</b>	<b>6.215</b>	<b>-0.060</b>	<b>-1.076</b>	<b>5.079</b>

14 The forecast outturn position includes overspends within Head of Social Care of £5.836 million and in Education and Skills of £0.220 million, with underspends forecast within CYPS Central of £0.668 million and Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.309 million. Further details are provided below:

- (a) Childrens Social Care is forecast to be a net £5.836 million over budget for the year. The Service is forecasting a net overspend of £5.795 million relating to the cost of placements for children looked after, after taking account of costs relating to higher rates for fostering allowances that will be met corporately.
- (b) The pressure on the budget in children's social care has been evident for a number of years now, as the number of children in the care system has increased significantly and their needs have continued to become more complex and more expensive to accommodate. The budget for this area for 2023/24 is £62.285 million, an increase of £15.232 million on the previous year.
- (c) The total number of CLA increased by 126 between June 2022 and June 2023, from 964 to 1,090 (+13%). Approximately one third of the increase (41) across this period relates to the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- (d) The costs of UASC CLA are fully funded via grant from central government and therefore there is no net increase to the forecast position due to this increase.
- (e) The increase in non-UASC placements of 85 over the period has been broadly equally split between an increase in high-cost placements (those costing over £100,000 per placement per annum) and those in lower cost placements.

- (f) The Education Service is forecast to have an overspend of £0.220 million to the year end. The main reasons for the overspend position are highlighted below:
- i. A forecast shortfall of £0.495 million against income budgets due to a drop in levels of SLA income as schools convert to academy status and reductions in lettings / courses income.
  - ii. A forecast overspend of £0.194 million relating to council run Nursery provision.
  - iii. A forecast overspend of £0.192 million relating to the write off of invoices dated prior to 2019/20, which are now deemed unlikely to be recovered. As these aged debts have previously been provided for as part of the service bad debt provision, there is an equivalent offsetting underspend reported in the Central CYPS budget.
  - iv. A forecast overspend of £64,000 relating to the Virtual School Head, largely due to a reduction in de-delegated funding for this year.
  - v. A forecast overspend of £42,000 relating to the operation of Durham Leadership Centre due to a shortfall in lettings income.
  - vi. These overspends are offset by a saving of £0.177 million against employee budgets, largely resulting from a staffing restructure in Education Durham that will be implemented from September 2023, as well as other vacancies across the Education service.
  - vii. There are also further underspends in the following areas of the Education budget:
    - £0.220 million against the Early Years Sustainability budget;
    - £0.219 million against Pension Liabilities budgets;
    - £0.160 million saving on against Early Years administration budgets.
  - viii. There is no anticipated cash limit impact for the Progression and Learning service after the net use of reserves.

- ix. A significant part of this service is funded by European (ESF) grants that will end on 31 December 2023. There will be ongoing costs beyond this point and a prudent forecast of those staff continuing in post beyond 31 December 2023 has been made and an assumption included that Progression and Learning reserves will meet this cost.
  - x. An estimate of £0.200 million has also been included in the forecast for associated redundancies and these costs will be met by the corporate ER/VR reserve.
- (g) A forecast underspend of £0.668 million against Central CYPS budgets is largely as the result of a forecast reduction in the bad debt provision for the year.
  - (h) Early Help, Inclusion is forecasting an underspend of £0.309 million.
  - (i) Aycliffe Secure Centre is reporting a forecast overspend of £0.720 million however this has been classed as outside of the CYPS cash limit and will be met corporately. The overspend is largely due to difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff, which means fewer young people can be accommodated and results in reduced income levels.
  - (j) The remaining service areas in EHIVC are forecasting an underspend of £0.309 million mainly attributable to underspends against employee and activity budgets.
  - (k) It is forecast that expenditure will be in line with budget for the Operational Support area of the service.
- 15 The forecast cash limit outturn shows the position after a net £8.819 million movement to and from reserves, the major items being:
- (a) £3.410 million drawdown from Schools Reserves to write off School deficits as part of the academy transfer process.
  - (b) £3.219 million drawdown from Progression and Learning Reserves to fund the impact of ESF grant funding reductions from quarter four, with new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant allocations not being receivable until April 2024.
  - (c) £1.182 million drawdown from Childrens Social Care Reserves to fund the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, Homes for Ukraine, to fund service developments in relation to Emotional Wellbeing and to support service delivery.

- (d) £0.790 million drawdown from the Corporate ERVR reserve to fund Progression and Learning and Schools forecasted redundancies as the service is restructured to meet UKSPF grant funding levels.
  - (e) £83,000 drawdown from the AHS Social Care Reserve relating to Children’s Social Care Services.
  - (f) £75,000 million drawdown from Education Reserves in relation to various education projects; and
- 16 No budget transfers have been actioned in the first quarter.
- 17 Taking the forecast outturn position into account, there is a £5.078 million deficit cash limit reserve balance at 31 March 2024. This will, as in previous years, need to be funded corporately from the General Reserve.

### Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools

- 18 The council currently maintains 156 schools, including nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and a single Alternative Provision (AP) school. The AP school is for pupils who have been permanently excluded from other schools, or who are at risk of permanent exclusion.
- 19 The council had 161 maintained schools at the time of budget setting, however five schools have since converted to academy status.
- 20 The retained school reserves at the start of the year were a net £28.463 million, which included the five schools that have since converted and £0.239 million for schools awaiting transfer having previously converted.

School	Reserves at 1 April 2023 £ million
Wellfield School	-2.776
Vane Road Primary	0.382
Collierley Primary	0.123
Woodham Burn Primary	0.077
Easington C of E Primary	0.037
Awaiting transfer	0.239
<b>Net change due to academisation</b>	<b>-1.919</b>

- 21 The recast reserve position for the remaining 156 maintained schools at quarter one is shown in the following table:

Subjective Budget Heading	Original Budget	Quarter 1 Forecast	Forecast to Budget Variance
	£ Million	£ Million	£ Million
Employees	215.988	216.675	0.687
Premises	16.402	16.512	0.110
Transport	1.983	1.978	-0.005
Supplies	36.872	36.950	0.078
Central Support & DRF	0	0.122	0.122
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>271.245</b>	<b>272.237</b>	<b>0.992</b>
Income	-74.850	-78.466	-3.723
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>196.395</b>	<b>193.771</b>	<b>-2.731</b>
Budget share	189.016	189.230	0.214
<b>Use of reserves</b>	<b>7.379</b>	<b>4.541</b>	<b>-2.838</b>
Revised Balance at 31 March 2023	30.382	30.382	0
<b>Forecast at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>23.003</b>	<b>25.841</b>	<b>2.838</b>

- 22 As with the council, schools are facing a range of unfunded and volatile inflationary pressures. Pay awards, for instance are forecast to outstrip the initial budget planning assumptions.
- 23 In overall terms, the quarter one forecast reflects an improved position from the original budget where these schools were forecasting to require £7.379 million of reserves to balance the in-year financial position. The updated position at quarter one is that the use of reserves figure will be £4.541 million, a reduction of £2.838 million against the original budget plans.
- 24 The quarter one position shown in the table above includes a provisional estimate of the impact on maintained primary and secondary schools of the teachers' pay award offer (6.5% from September 2023), offset by additional associated grant allocations, which were announced on 17 July 2023. Forecasts for individual schools will be updated with this information at quarter two.
- 25 The forecast position at individual school level indicates that a small number of schools may be in deficit at the end of the current financial year and a more significant number of schools may not have sufficient reserves available to set a balanced budget in 2024/25
- 26 The council will work closely with schools over autumn term to support the financial planning process to set balanced budgets for 2024/25.

## Dedicated Schools Grant Centrally Retained Block

- 27 The forecast outturn position for the centrally retained DSG budgets shows a projected underspend of £0.245 million, as detailed below:

DSG Block	Budget £ Million	Outturn £ Million	Over / (Under) Spend £ Million
High Needs	85.751	85.506	-0.245
Early Years	34.881	34.881	0.000
Central Schools Services	2.898	2.898	0.000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>123.530</b>	<b>123.285</b>	<b>-0.245</b>

- 28 The forecast High Needs block (HNB) position reflects the continuing effort to reduce the High Needs Block cumulative deficit, however, it should be noted that a fuller understanding of pressures linked to top-up funding and special school places will only become clearer once the new academic year begins.
- 29 All areas of HNB expenditure will continue to be kept under close review, with particular attention on top-up funding as we move into the new academic year, and it is probable that we will continue to see an upward trend in the volume of requests for additional support for high needs pupils.
- 30 A five-year recovery plan for high needs block funding and expenditure, including recovery of the accumulated deficit by the end of the five-year period, was approved by Cabinet in April 2022. A review of the current programme of work is taking place alongside work with DfE through the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme.
- 31 The DfE announced provisional High Needs DSG allocations for 2024/25 on 17 July 2023 and Durham's allocation will increase by 4.5% from the 2023/24 level. This is significantly below the average increase of 15% that has been received over the previous four years and will present a challenging funding position next year, which could impact on the recovery plan.
- 32 Early Years Funding for 2022/23 has been retrospectively adjusted in 2023/24 to reflect the latest pupil numbers included on the early year's census in January 2023.
- 33 Notification was received on 28 July 2023 that Durham's allocation was to be reduced by £0.359 million, largely relating to lower numbers of 2-year-old pupils, and therefore reducing the Early Years Block reserve from £0.722 million to £0.363 million.



34 The impact of the current forecast on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table:

<b>DSG Reserves</b>	<b>High Needs Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million</b>	<b>Early Years Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million</b>	<b>Schools Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million</b>	<b>Total DSG (Unusable Reserve) £ Million</b>
<b>Balance as at 1 April 2022</b>	<b>-8.843</b>	<b>0.656</b>	<b>2.401</b>	<b>-5.786</b>
2021/22 Early Years Adjustment	-	0.594	-	0.594
Use/ Contribution in 2022/23	0.208	-0.528	-1.620	-1.940
<b>Balance as at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>-8.835</b>	<b>0.722</b>	<b>0.781</b>	<b>-7.132</b>
2022/23 Early Years Adjustment	-	-0.359	-	-0.359
Forecasted Use / Cont in 2023/24	0.245	-	-	0.245
<b>Balance as at 1 April 2024</b>	<b>-8.390</b>	<b>0.363</b>	<b>0.781</b>	<b>-7.246</b>

35 The overall DSG reserve was in a net deficit position of £7.132 million at the start of the financial year as a result of the accumulated deficit position in relation to the high needs block. The overall deficit position is now forecast to increase to £7.246 million to the year end.

### **Capital Programme**

36 The capital programme has been revised to take into account budget reprofiled from 2022-23 following the final accounts for that year and to take account of any revisions in the current year.

37 The revised budget is presented at Appendix 3 together with actual expenditure to date. The budget may be subsequently amended with approval from MOWG.

### **Author(s)**

David Watchman, Finance Manager

Tel: 03000 268573

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital projected outturn position.

### **Consultation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

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

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Climate Change**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Human Rights**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Crime and Disorder**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Staffing**

There are no implications associated with this report. Any over or under spending against the employee budgets are disclosed within the report.

### **Accommodation**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **Risk**

The management of risk is intrinsic to good budgetary control. This report forms an important part of the governance arrangements within Children and Young People's Services. Through routine / regular monitoring of budgets and continual re-forecasting to year end the service grouping can ensure that it manages its finances within the cash envelope allocated to it.

### **Procurement**

There are no implications associated with this report

## Appendix 2: CYPS Forecast position by subjective analysis

Subjective Heading	Revised Annual Budget £million	Forecast Outturn £million	Variance £million	OCL £million	Contingencies £million	Cash Limit Variance £million
Employees	93,479	92,830	-649	-780	0	-1,429
Premises	5,129	5,637	508	170	-241	437
Transport	36,357	36,464	106	0	0	106
Supplies and Services	12,168	17,554	5,386	0	0	5,386
Third Party Payments	63,228	68,624	5,396	-590	0	4,806
Transfer Payments	1,814	1,865	51	0	0	51
Capital	13,962	13,962	0	0	0	0
Central Support	28,686	23,936	-4,750	0	0	-4,750
DRF	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Expenditure sub-total</b>	<b>254,823</b>	<b>260,872</b>	<b>6,048</b>	<b>-1,200</b>	<b>-241</b>	<b>4,607</b>
Grant	-28,090	-27,298	792	0	0	792
Contributions Summary	-5,057	-5,139	-81	0	0	-81
Sales Summary	-53	-32	21	0	0	21
Charges	-18,614	-17,914	700	0	0	700
Rents	-312	-431	-119	0	130	11
Recharges	-34,223	-35,008	-785	0	0	-785
Other Income Summary	-23	-273	-249	64	0	-185
<b>Income sub-total</b>	<b>-86,372</b>	<b>-86,095</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>473</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>168,451</b>	<b>174,777</b>	<b>6,327</b>	<b>-1,136</b>	<b>-111</b>	<b>5,078</b>

---

**Appendix 3: CYPS Capital Budget 2023-24 as at 30 June 2023**


---

<b>CYPS</b>	<b>Actual 30/06/2023 £million</b>	<b>Current 2023/24 Budget £million</b>	<b>Budget Future Years £million</b>
Childrens Care	0.454	3.255	1.800
EHIVC (Inc. SEN Capital)	0.006	14.178	0.000
Education-School Devolved Capital	0.768	5.466	1.100
Education-School Related	3.313	67.462	44.507
Secure Services	0.099	0.503	0.000
Planning & Service Strategy	0.163	0.588	0.077
	<b>4.803</b>	<b>91.450</b>	<b>47.484</b>

## Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

22 September 2023

Quarter One, 2023/24  
Performance Management Report



### Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

#### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter one, 2023/24, April to June 2023.

#### Executive Summary

- 3 The County Council is a key partner within the County Durham Together Partnership. Collectively partners work towards delivering a shared plan - the [County Durham Vision 2035](#). The vision document was developed with partner organisations and the public. It sets out what we would like the county to be like over the next decade and beyond. The vision is for:

**a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.**

- 4 We have set out how the council will operate effectively in the delivery of its services and its contribution to achieving this vision in our [Council Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>. The Council Plan<sup>1</sup> is structured around five thematic areas: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. We monitor our success through a suite of Key Performance Indicators (our corporate performance framework), which forms the basis of this report.
- 5 In line with previous reports, we are continuing to report performance on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas. In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

<sup>1</sup> The [Council Plan](#) is a rolling four-year plan, refreshed every year in line with the MTFP. Current version covers 2023 to 2027

- 6 However, to allow greater clarity of performance against our objectives, we have introduced a new easy-read report format (attached at appendix two).
- 7 The main difference in the new format, compared to the previous format, is the suite of dashboards (structured around specific service areas) which use greater data visualisation to provide more focus and greater transparency on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance to target. The new report retains a summary highlighting ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing’ for each theme, and a new executive summary has been added.
- 8 To allow the reader, including members of Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to compare the two formats and understand the changes made, we have also produced the quarter one report in the previous format (attached at appendix three). We are also seeking comments and suggestions on improvements to the new format which will be incorporated in quarter two.
- 9 We want to be a well-functioning local authority in relation to performance. Therefore, we are working to achieve the best practice model as set out in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) recently published (July 2023) proposal for updating Best Value standards<sup>2</sup>. We will continue to develop the following through our performance management processes and the wider Corporate Business Intelligence Review:
  - (a) An organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans.
  - (b) A corporate plan which is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.
  - (c) Clear and effective mechanisms for scrutinising performance across all service areas. Performance is regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered.

## **Context**

- 10 The council is a large organisation providing a broad range of services, and our operating environment can at times be challenging. However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
  - (a) Across the county, inward investment continues, new infrastructure is being created and new business parks with the potential to create thousands of jobs are being developed. The promotion of the county as a year-round tourist destination continues (in 2022, tourism contributed more than £1 billion to our local economy for the first time).
  - (b) Demand for statutory children’s social care and early help remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are

increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment is proving successful.

- (c) Although health continues to be a challenging area, life expectancy is increasing, and life chances are improving. We are continuing to help households who are financially vulnerable through our financial support schemes.
- (d) Environmental cleanliness remains good, and carbon emissions are reducing significantly from the 1990 baseline.
- (e) We have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through our digital work, and user satisfaction with our services remains high.

## **Recommendation**

11 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (a) Note the overall strong position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.
- (b) Note the changes and improvements to the new format performance report which will be used exclusively from quarter two 2023/24.

## Background papers

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>

## Other useful documents

- Council Plan 2023 to 2027 (current plan)  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2023-2027/pdf/CouncilPlan2023-2027.pdf?m=638221688616370000>
- Quarter Four, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s174900/Item%204%20Q4%202022-23%202%201.pdf>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s161902/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q1%202022-23%20Revised.pdf>

## Author

Steve Evans

Contact: [steve.evans@durham.gov.uk](mailto:steve.evans@durham.gov.uk)



---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Climate Change**

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

### **Staffing**

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



# Corporate Performance Report

Quarter One, 2023/24



## Contents (blue text links to sections of the report)

---

	➤ <a href="#">Executive Summary</a>	
Our People	➤ <a href="#">Our People Performance Report</a>	
	Performance Dashboards	➤ <a href="#">Children's social care (1 of 4)</a>
		➤ <a href="#">Children's social care (2 of 4)</a>
		➤ <a href="#">Children's social care (3 of 4)</a>
		➤ <a href="#">Children's social care (4 of 4)</a>
		➤ <a href="#">Education</a>
		➤ <a href="#">SEND</a>
	➤ <a href="#">Data tables</a>	

## Executive Summary

---

- 1 This performance report covers the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (April to June 2023). It sets out our progress towards delivering the key priorities set out within our [Council Plan 2023-27](#).
- 2 Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages structured around the five thematic areas of, our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council.
- 3 In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

### Our people

- 4 The priority aims to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities, and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and will invest in a multi-million-pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

### Going Well

- 5 Demand for children's statutory social care and early help support remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment activity over the spring has been successful with the service hopeful to fill many of their current vacancies in the autumn.
- 6 The Stronger Families programme continues to exceed expectations with 80% of the annual target for families to achieve significant and sustained outcomes completed by quarter one.

### Issues we are addressing

- 7 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 8 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 9 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant

barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and also expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

## Risk Management

- 10 The government's statutory guidance for best value authorities sets out the characteristics of a well-functioning authority. This details the arrangements that councils should have in place for robust governance and scrutiny including how risk awareness and management should inform decision making. The latest risk management progress report can be found [here](#).

## Priority: Our People

County Durham is a place where people will enjoy fulfilling, long and independent lives. We aim to,

- ensure children and young people will enjoy the best start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing
- ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will achieve the best possible outcomes
- ensure all children and young people will have a safe childhood
- promote positive behaviours
- better integrate health and social care services
- tackle the stigma and discrimination of poor mental health and build resilient communities
- people will be supported to live independently for as long as possible by delivering more home to meet the needs of older and disabled people
- support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable and protect adults with care and support needs from harm
- protect and improve the health of the local population, tackling leading causes of illness and death

## National, Regional and Local Picture

- 11 Children's social care reform is a key concern nationally and following an [independent review published in 2022](#) the government issued a consultation on their implementation strategy, [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) which closed in May 2023. The strategy is based on recommendations from three independent reviews in total and sought views on various aspects of the children's social care system including support and protection for children and families, support for kinship carers, and wider family networks, reforms to the experience of being in care, including corporate parenting, support for the social care workforce and delivery and system reform.
- 12 The national context around this new strategy is of growing demand and complexity in the face of chronic staffing shortages requiring significant intervention to reverse an upward trend of children going into care predicted to hit 100,000 by 2025. Some of these pressures are illustrated in this performance report, but not to the extent that some local authorities are facing. Children's services in County Durham, along with regional and sectoral partners try to influence the government strategy to get better outcomes for children and families in the county.
- 13 Demand for special educational needs support through education, health and care plans is rising nationally. The [number of pupils on EHCPs in England stands at 517,026](#) – more than double the total in 2015 (240,183). The government's [SEND improvement plan](#), published in March, sets out new national standards to clarify the support available to children and their families and promises thousands more specialist school places. Growth in new requests for EHCPs in County Durham has been more acute than national or regional levels and the service continues to review their plans to respond to increasing needs in both the short and medium term.

## Going Well

### Children's Social Care and Early Help

- 14 During quarter one, we received almost 5,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of 6% (around 300 contacts) on the same period last year. As seen in previous quarters there has been a slight reduction (4%, around 50 referrals) in statutory referrals, which remain lower than benchmarks.
- 15 Improved practice has led to a reduction in our re-referral rate for statutory children's social care referrals to 15% in quarter one. This is the lowest rate in the region and remains below latest benchmarks and means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 16 At quarter one there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts. This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022). Targeted recruitment activity over the spring and new recruitment and retention allowances have been successful, and we are expecting 40 newly qualified social workers coming into post in the next few months. A further eight external social workers are also expected, some with start dates in the autumn and others in pre-employment checks. Caseloads are also starting to improve with 27% of social workers having 25 or more cases compared to 35% last quarter.
- 17 Between September 2015 and June 2023, 7,613 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme, comprised of 6,748 attaining significant and sustained outcomes, and 865 who maintained continuous employment. Progress this year is going well, and we are on track to exceed the government's target of helping 1,230 families by the end of 2023/24.

### Free School Meals

- 18 The Education service has been working with schools to encourage eligible pupils to take a free school meal. Latest school census data shows free school meals take up has increased to 23% from 20.6% last year and is now similar to North East levels (23.8%) and higher than national (18.8%).

## Issues we are addressing

### Children's Social Care

- 19 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 20 Capacity issues arising from high caseloads may be impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. The proportion completed in the quarter reduced to 75% (from 89% in quarter one 2022/23), and is now lower than national and regional benchmarks. The service continues to monitor this.

## **SEND**

- 21 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 22 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and also expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LA's to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.
- 23 Department for Education data for the calendar year was released in the quarter, which demonstrate demand for new EHCPs has grown by 68% since 2019 in County Durham, more than national (+39%) and regional levels (+36%) over the same period.

## **Elective Home Education**

- 24 Numbers of children being home educated are rising locally, regionally and nationally. In June 681 children and young people were home educated, an additional 51 since October 2022. The increase is less than that seen nationally, and the proportion remains low at 0.8% of school aged children.
- 25 Last year's Ofsted inspection of Children's services noted there are comprehensive systems in place to check that parents who elect to home educate are providing an appropriate education and where this is not the case, there is a robust response and issuing of return-to-school orders.
- 26 There is appropriate information on any potential safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities of pupils being home educated. This ensures that any potential risks are identified and well managed. County Durham continues to have a strong multi-agency Education at Home group that is well established, meets half-termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, and wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding. This continues to be monitored within the service.
- 27 County Durham's collaborative approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children electively home educated has recently been recognised by the national child safeguarding review panel who have approached the council for a case study for use in a national briefing.



## Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

**1,440**  
early help open cases  
(1,360)

**481**  
CSC referrals per 10,000 population  
(496)

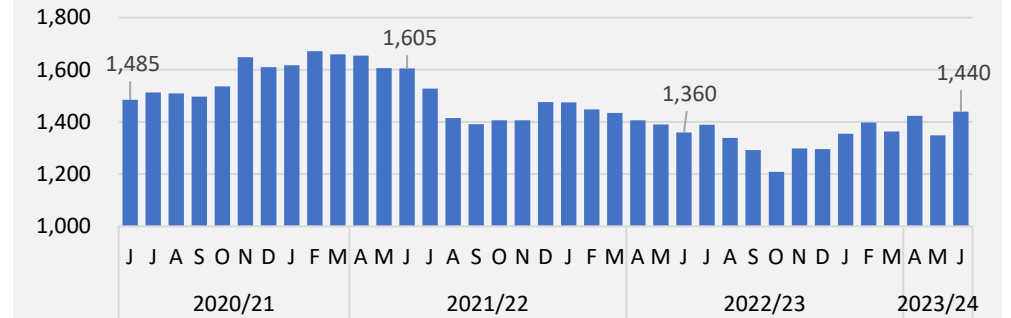
**15%**  
CSC re-referrals  
(17%)

# Children's Social Care Dashboard

## Early Help

- Overall demand for Early Help support reduced post-covid but have been rising since October 2022 when the number of EH cases were at their lowest at 1,209 cases.
- Feedback from families and young working with the service continues to be very positive with 87% of parent/carers and 85% of young people happy or very happy with the support they received

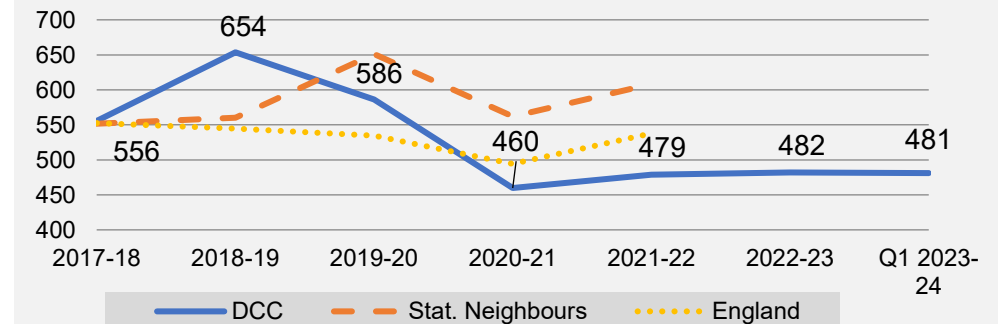
Early Help Open Cases



## Rate of Referrals (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- Demand for Children's Social Care remains positive.
- Following the reduction during Covid-19, when schools were shut, referrals increased slightly but are not as high as pre-Covid-19 levels.

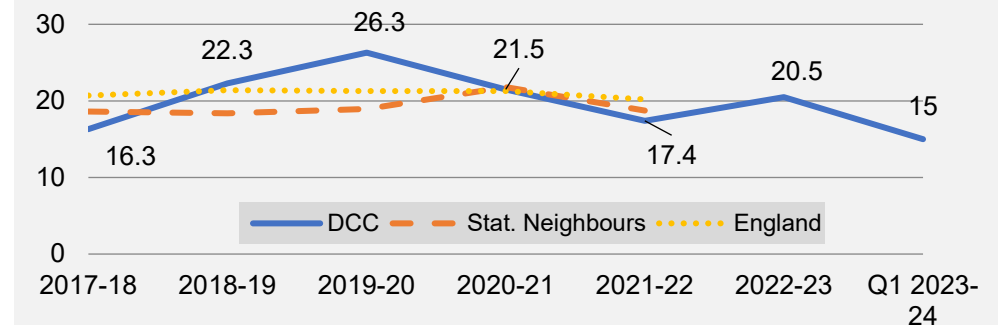
Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



## CSC re-referrals within 12 months

- Durham has the lowest re-referral rate in the region which tends to indicate good quality outcomes within the service
- 181 of the 1,226 referrals in quarter one were re-referrals.

% of CSC Re-Referrals Within 12 Months of Previous Referral



# Children's Social Care Dashboard

## Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

Page 194

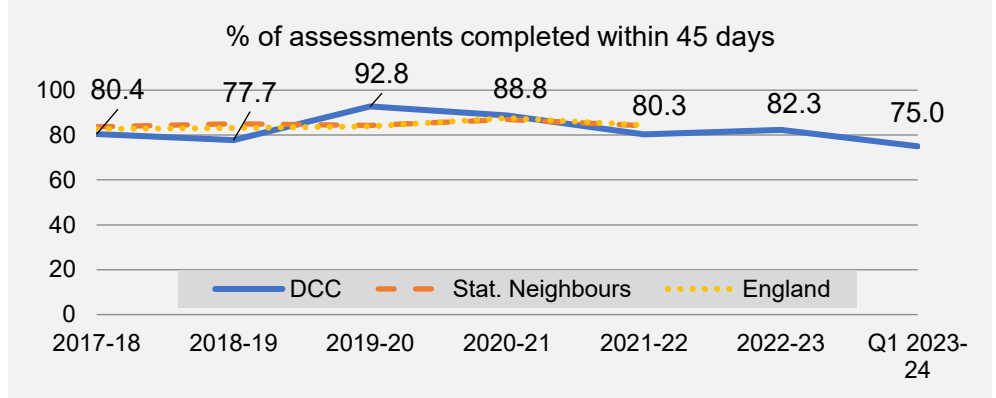
**75%**  
CSC assessments  
completed within  
45 days  
(89%)

**340**  
child in need rate  
(344)

**50**  
child protection  
plan rate  
(44)

### Assessments completed (within 45 days)

- Assessment timeliness has reduced over this quarter, likely as a result of service capacity issues within specific teams.
- The average assessment is completed within 36 days

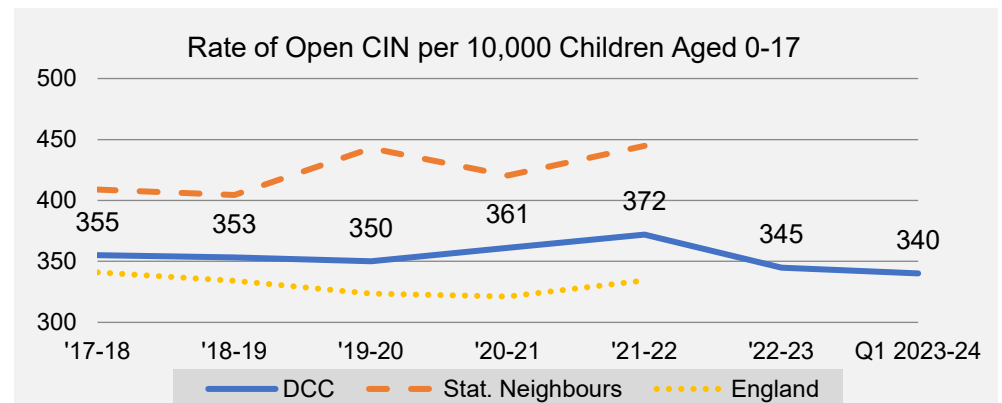


### Statutory Social Care Cases

The overall number of open cases remains steady but growing numbers of Children on a Child Protection Plan and in Care are illustrative of increasingly complex caseloads within the service.

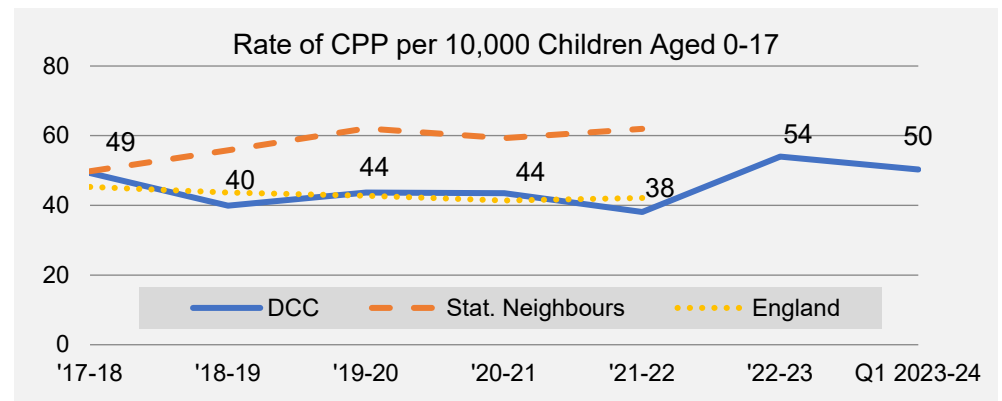
#### Rate of open CiN (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- The rate of CiN episodes ceased per 10,000 children aged 0-17 in Q1 2023/24 is 405
- 84% of CiN have a primary need of abuse/neglect in comparison to 57% in England.



#### Rate of open CPP (per 10,000 children aged 0-17)

- The rate of children on a CPP has increased over the last year to be higher than national levels.
- Trends in CPP tend to be cyclical and numbers will likely reduce over the next six months.



CSC: children's social care  
CiN: children in need  
CPP: child protection plan

## Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

**110**  
children in care rate  
(96)

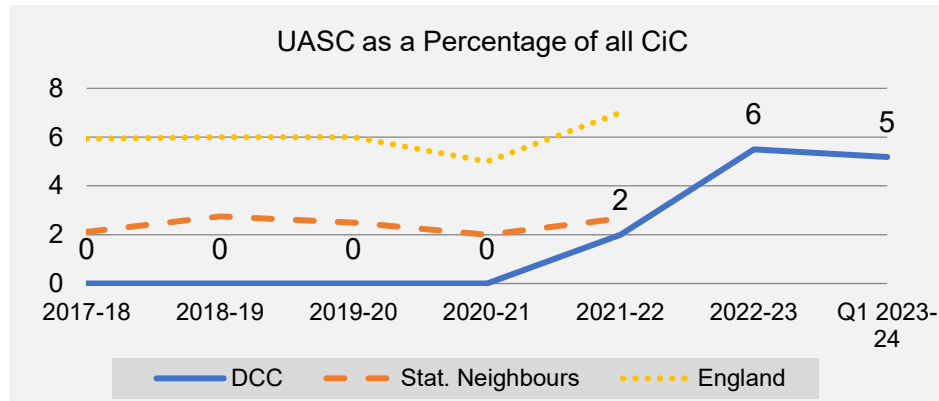
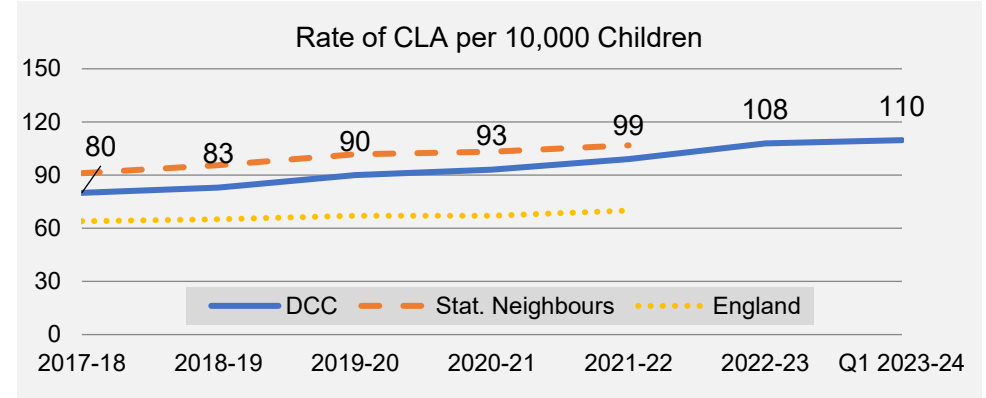
**5%**  
UASC as a  
percentage of all  
CiC  
(2%)

**284**  
care leavers  
aged 16-24  
(283)

# Children's Social Care Dashboard

## Rate of children in care (per 10,000 children)

- Numbers of children in care are growing nationally and regionally. Recently growth has been accelerated through UASC referrals from the National Transfer Scheme but underlying long term growth trends remain consistent.
- The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and Durham still has the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest rate in the North East.



## Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- The percentage of children in our care that are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) is increasing with national trends due to the National Transfer Scheme.
- Further increases are expected with Durham expected to receive a third of all referrals in the North East in the data model.

**Primary KPIs**  
(same period last year)

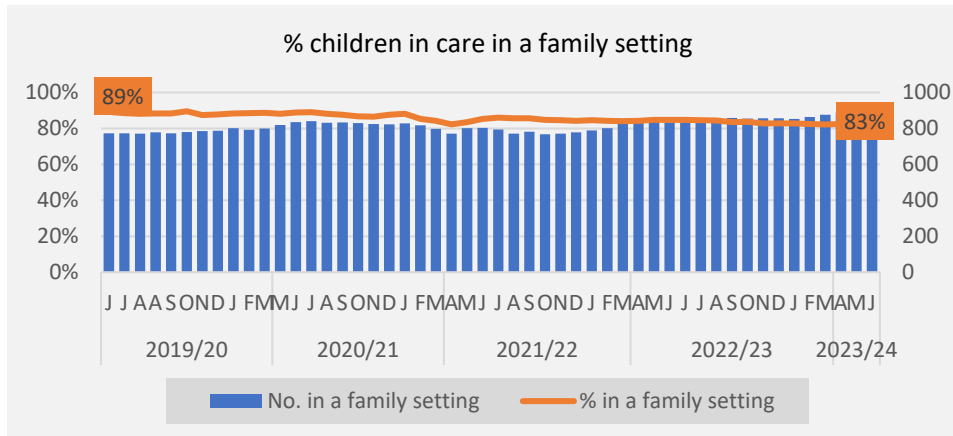
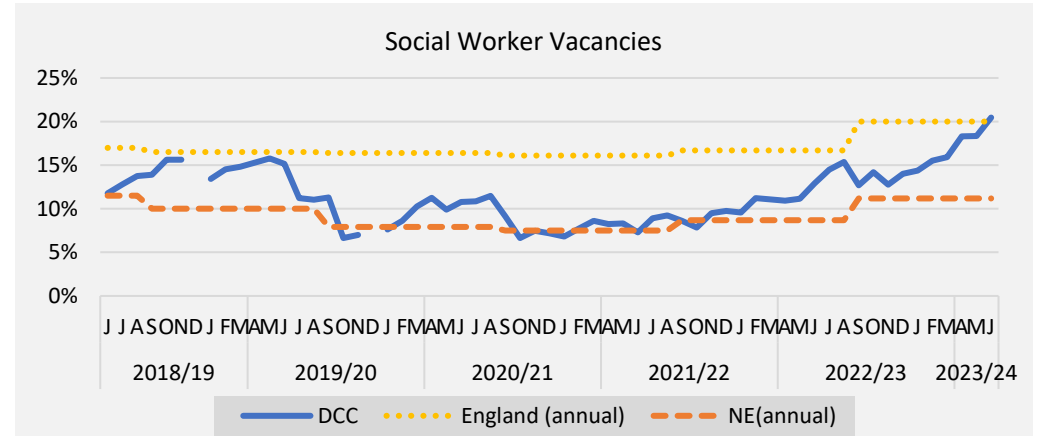
**20%**  
social worker  
vacancies  
(13%)

**83%**  
children in care in a  
family setting  
(85%)

# Children's Social Care Dashboard

## Social worker vacancies

- At 30 June 2023, there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts.
- This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022)
- 48 of these vacancies have been filled and prospective staff will start from September onwards. Recruitment and retention remain a key priority and capacity remains a key concern.



## Children in care in a family setting

- At the end of June, 83% of children in care were in a family setting.
- Although this is a reduction from June 2022 (85%) this is due to an increase in children in care as the number of children placed in family settings has increased by 11%

## Primary KPIs

(same period last year)

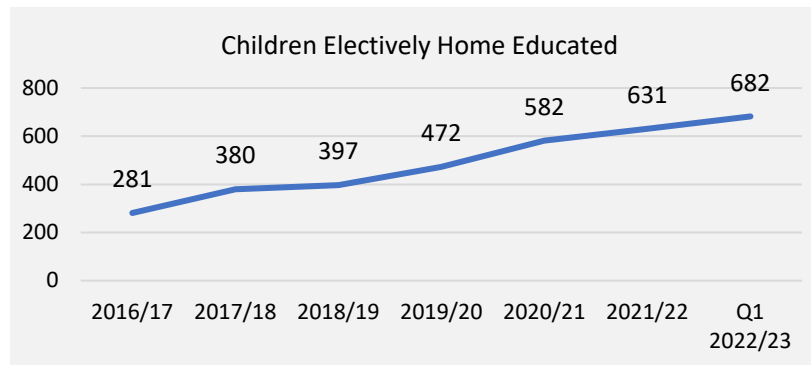
**84.1%**  
pupils in schools  
Ofsted judged 'good'  
or 'better'  
(83.1%)

**682**  
children are  
electively home  
educated  
(631)

**30.8%**  
eligible for free  
school meals  
(29.1%)

**23%**  
take-up on free  
school meals  
(20.6%)

# Education Dashboard

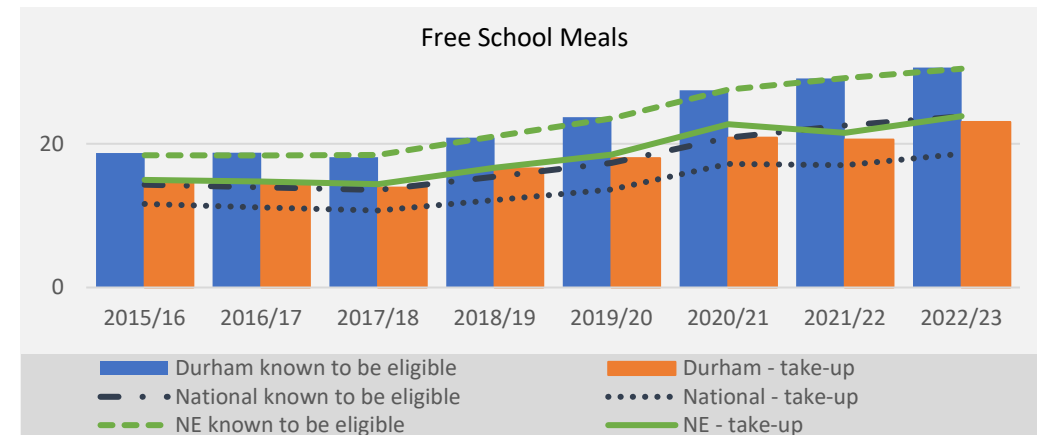


## Children electively home educated

- Locally, EHE numbers continue to rise. The rate of local rises is in line with those seen nationally in the 2021/22 academic year and the rate of rises were lower than those seen nationally in the 2020/21 academic year.
- National reporting around EHE is still developing and the DfE will publish new benchmarking data late this year.
- Our proportion of EHE locally remains low at 0.8% of the total school age population.

## Pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals

- Free school meals eligibility continues to rise due to the roll out of universal credit (and associated protections) and the cost-of-living
- There are gaps between those being eligible and those taking free school meals on census day also continues to rise along with regional and national trends



## Primary KPIs (same period last year)

**4,489**  
EHCPs in County Durham  
(4,038)

**11,174**  
pupils on SEN support  
(10,807)

**197**  
new requests for EHCP in quarter  
(179)

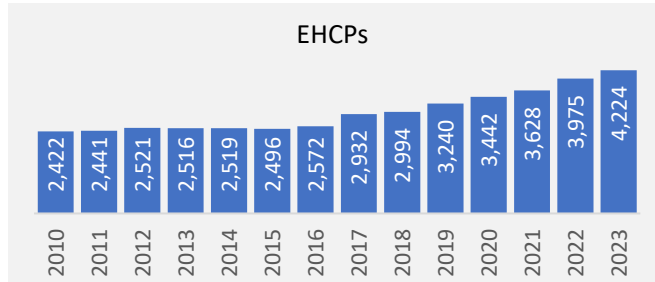
**4%**  
EHCPs completed within 20 weeks  
(12m rolling)  
(51%)

EHCP: Education Health Care Plan  
SEN: Special Educational Need

# SEND Dashboard

## Education, Health and Care Plans

- The number of children and young people with an EHCP continues to increase.
- This is an 11% increase on 12 months ago



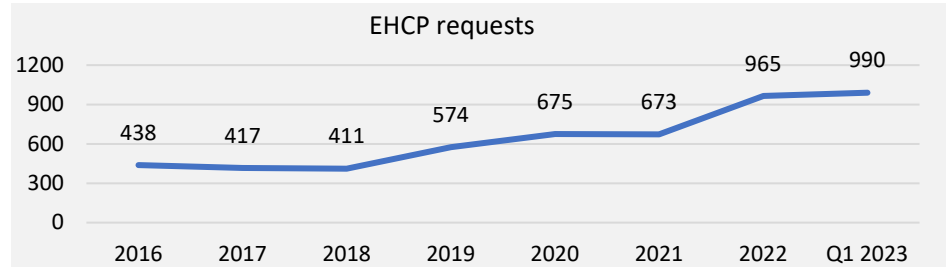
## EHCPs completed with 20 weeks

The higher level of demand alongside the shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) and the time it takes to commission and agree suitable provision has meant that no new EHCPs were fully completed and agreed within the expected 20 week timescale during the quarter.

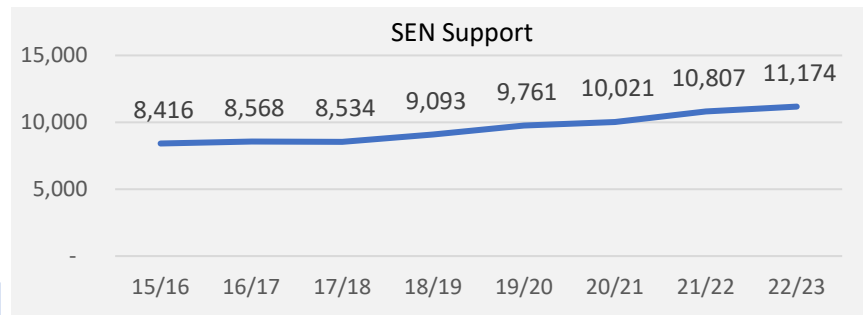
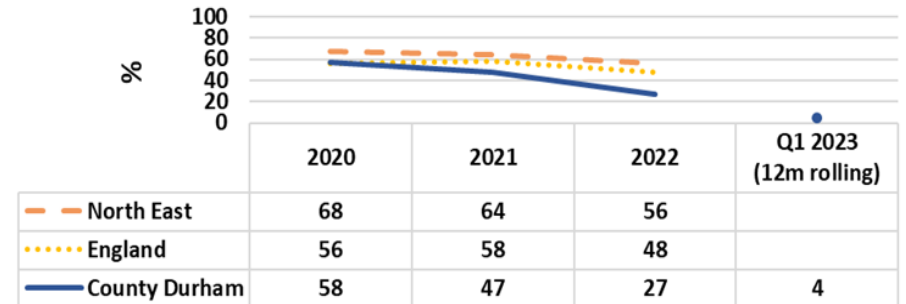
In 2022 we issued 603 EHCPs an **increase of 79%** since 2019, again greater than regional (+39%) and Eng (+27%)

## EHCP requests

There has been an increase in new requests for EHCPs. For the whole of 2022 EHCP requests increased by 68% compared to 2019, greater than NE +36% and England + 39% over the same period



## % EHCPs completed within 20 weeks



## SEN support

Similar to EHCP numbers, the number of pupils on SEN Support continues to increase (3.4% on last year). The average annual increase in SEN Support numbers over the last 8 years is 4.2% compared to 3.7% in North East and 4.7% nationally

# Data Tables

## Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or North East
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or North East
×	more than 2% behind	S	Performance is the same as national or North East

## Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

## National Benchmarking (N)

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

## North East Benchmarking (NE)

The North East comparator is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓			No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions <sup>3</sup>	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x			No
Improve the average grade of achievement of all our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (in line with 2030 ambitions)	4.65 (21/22)	5 by 2030	new PI			Yes
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new PI	new PI	new PI			No
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	94.7% (Mar 2023)	above N / NE x	87.4% ✓			Yes

## Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development (reported as academic year)	64.5% (2021/22)	Tracker -	n/a	64.5%	64.1%	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	84.1% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	83.1% ✓	87.6% x	86.4% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	93.9% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	90.9% ✓	94.1% x	Yes

<sup>3</sup> Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place



Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	70% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	83.1% x	75.9% x	Yes
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,489 (Jun 2023)	Tracker -	4,038 -			Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	110 [1,119]	Tracker -	98 -	70 -	107 -	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	340 [3,469]	Tracker -	344 -	334 -	445 -	Yes
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	983 (Apr-Jun 23)	1,230 [2023/24] ✓	581 ✓			Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight <sup>4</sup> <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	not reported	x	✓	No
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	59.2% (2021/22)	79% x	not reported	x	✓	No

<sup>4</sup> National Child Measurement Programme ceased March 2020 when schools closed due to the pandemic, therefore, North East and nearest neighbour comparators should be treated with caution due to missing data from some LAs. Whilst the data for the academic year 2020/21 has been published, local authority data is not available as only a 10% sample of data was recorded.

## Other Relevant Indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	5.5% ✓			Yes
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x		x	No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.2% (Jan-Mar 23)	0% x	14.8% x	x	x	Yes

**Children and Young People**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**22 September 2023**  
**Quarter One, 2023/24**  
**Performance Management Report**



**Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present an overview of progress towards delivery of the key priorities within the Council Plan 2023-27 in line with the council's corporate performance framework.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter one, 2023/24, April to June 2023.

**Executive Summary**

- 3 The County Council is a key partner within the County Durham Together Partnership. Collectively partners work towards delivering a shared plan - the [County Durham Vision 2035](#). The vision document was developed with partner organisations and the public. It sets out what we would like the county to be like over the next decade and beyond. The vision is for:

**a place where there are more and better jobs, people live long, and independent lives and our communities are well connected and supportive.**

- 4 We have set out how the council will operate effectively in the delivery of its services and its contribution to achieving this vision in our [Council Plan](#)<sup>1</sup>. The Council Plan<sup>1</sup> is structured around five thematic areas: our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council. We monitor our success through a suite of Key Performance Indicators (our corporate performance framework), which forms the basis of this report.
- 5 In line with previous reports, we are continuing to report performance on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas. In any given quarter, we will only include key performance indicators which have been updated during that quarter, for example, educational attainment will be updated annually in quarter three.

<sup>1</sup> The [Council Plan](#) is a rolling four-year plan and is refreshed every year in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan. The current version covers 2023 to 2027

## **Context**

- 6 The council is a large organisation providing a broad range of services, and our operating environment can at times be challenging. However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
- (a) Across the county, inward investment continues, new infrastructure is being created and new business parks with the potential to create thousands of jobs are being developed. The promotion of the county as a year-round tourist destination continues (in 2022, tourism contributed more than £1 billion to our local economy for the first time).
  - (b) Demand for statutory children's social care and early help remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment is proving successful.
  - (c) Although health continues to be a challenging area, life expectancy is increasing, and life chances are improving. We are continuing to help households who are financially vulnerable through our financial support schemes.
  - (d) Environmental cleanliness remains good, and carbon emissions are reducing significantly from the 1990 baseline.
  - (e) We have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through our digital work, and user satisfaction with our services remains high.

## **Recommendation**

- 7 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
- (a) Note the overall strong position and direction of travel in relation to quarter one performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.
  - (b) Note the changes and improvements to the new format performance report which will be used exclusively from quarter two 2023/24.

## **Analysis of the Performance Report**

- 8 The areas identified in this section are contributory indicators linked to the priorities of the Council Plan. Performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages against the five thematic areas within the Council Plan 2023-2027.

### **Our people**

- 9 The priority aims to help our residents live long and independent lives and remain in good health for as long as possible. We will protect and improve health by tackling the leading causes of illness and early death, inequalities, and the challenges around mental health. We will ensure a sustainable high-quality care market and will invest in a multi-million-pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

### **Going Well**

- 10 Demand for children's statutory social care and early help support remains consistent overall, though the composition of needs and interventions are increasingly complicated. Caseloads are improving and targeted recruitment activity over the spring has been successful with the service hopeful to fill many of their current vacancies in the autumn.
- 11 The Stronger Families programme continues to exceed expectations with 80% of the annual target for families to achieve significant and sustained outcomes completed by quarter one.

### **Areas which require attention**

- 12 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 13 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 14 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and expanding the physical capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE

to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

## Risk Management

- 15 The government's statutory guidance for best value authorities sets out the characteristics of a well-functioning authority. This details the arrangements that councils should have in place for robust governance and scrutiny including how risk awareness and management should inform decision making. The latest risk management progress report can be found [here](#).

## Background papers

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>

## Other useful documents

- Council Plan 2023 to 2027 (current plan)  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/34954/Durham-County-Council-Plan-2023-2027/pdf/CouncilPlan2023-2027.pdf?m=638221688616370000>
- Quarter Four, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s174900/Item%204%20Q4%2022-23%202%201.pdf>
- Quarter Three, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s166398/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q2%202022-23%20v2.1.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2022/23 Performance Management Report  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s161902/Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q1%202022-23%20Revised.pdf>

## Author

Steve Evans

Contact: [steve.evans@durham.gov.uk](mailto:steve.evans@durham.gov.uk)

---

## **Appendix 1: Implications**

---

### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable.

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

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Climate Change**

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable.

### **Crime and Disorder**

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

### **Staffing**

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health indicators has been included to monitor staffing issues.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable.

### **Risk**

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly performance management report.

### **Procurement**

Not applicable.



# Durham County Council Performance Management Report Quarter One, 2023/24





## 1.0 Our People: National, Regional & Local Picture

- 1 Children's social care reform is a key concern nationally and following an [independent review published in 2022](#) the government issued a consultation on their implementation strategy, [Stable Homes, Built on Love](#) which closed in May 2023. The strategy is based on recommendations from three independent reviews in total and sought views on various aspects of the children's social care system including support and protection for children and families, support for kinship carers, and wider family networks, reforms to the experience of being in care, including corporate parenting, support for the social care workforce and delivery and system reform.
- 2 The national context around this new strategy is of growing demand and complexity in the face of chronic staffing shortages requiring significant intervention to reverse an upward trend of children going into care predicted to hit 100,000 by 2025. Some of these pressures are illustrated in this performance report, but not to the extent that some local authorities are facing. Children's services in County Durham, along with regional and sectoral partners try to influence the government strategy to get better outcomes for children and families in the county.
- 3 Demand for special educational needs support through education, health and care plans is rising nationally. The [number of pupils on EHCPs in England stands at 517,026](#) – more than double the total in 2015 (240,183). The government's [SEND improvement plan](#), published in March, sets out new national standards to clarify the support available to children and their families and promises thousands more specialist school places. Growth in new requests for EHCPs in County Durham has been more acute than national or regional levels and the service continues to review their plans to respond to increasing needs in both the short and medium term.

### 1.1 Council Activity: Going Well

#### Children's Social Care and Early Help

- 4 During quarter one, we received almost 5,000 contacts for early help and children's social care at First Contact (children's services front door), a reduction of 6% (around 300 contacts) on the same period last year. As seen in previous quarters there has been a slight reduction (4%, around 50 referrals) in statutory referrals, which remain lower than benchmarks.
- 5 Improved practice has led to a reduction in our re-referral rate for statutory children's social care referrals to 15% in quarter one. This is the lowest rate in the region and remains below latest benchmarks and means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 6 At quarter one there were 71 social worker vacancies which equates to 20% of posts. This has increased and is now in line with national levels (at September 2022). Targeted recruitment activity over the spring and new recruitment and retention

allowances have been successful, and we are expecting 40 newly qualified social workers coming into post in the next few months. A further eight external social workers are also expected, some with start dates in the autumn and others in pre-employment checks. Caseloads are also starting to improve with 27% of social workers having 25 or more cases compared to 35% last quarter.

- 7 Between September 2015 and June 2023, 7,613 families were turned around via the Stronger Families programme, comprised of 6,748 attaining significant and sustained outcomes, and 865 who maintained continuous employment. Progress this year is going well, and we are on track to exceed the government's target of helping 1,230 families by the end of 2023/24.

### **Free School Meals**

- 8 The Education service has been working with schools to encourage eligible pupils to take a free school meal. Latest school census data shows free school meals take up has increased to 23% from 20.6% last year and is now similar to North East levels (23.8%) and higher than national (18.8%).

## **1.2 Council Activity: Areas which require attention**

### **Children's Social Care**

- 9 The number of children in care continues to increase in line with national and regional trends. The North East has the highest level of children in care in England and County Durham remains the fifth lowest rate in the North East based on latest benchmarks. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to the increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children placed in County Durham as part of national relocation plans.
- 10 Capacity issues arising from high caseloads may be impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. The proportion completed in the quarter reduced to 75% (from 89% in quarter one 2022/23) and is now lower than national and regional benchmarks. The service continues to monitor this.

### **SEND**

- 11 Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) continue to increase substantially with 70% growth in the last two years. The assessment process is complex with a number of required inputs in line with the statutory guidance. A shortage of educational psychologists (a national problem) to undertake the required assessment, and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision has meant that the timescales for completion of 20 weeks for Education and Health Care Plans is not currently being met.
- 12 The service is reviewing plans to build capacity to meet increased demand and manage new requests within the context of a graduated approach to ensure children are supported with quality provision in an appropriate setting. There are significant barriers to increasing educational psychology capacity and expanding the physical

capacity of our special school sector to meet the escalating demand we are experiencing. Despite these challenges at a broader system level Durham performs well and we have recently been invited by DfE to work with three neighbouring LAs to share best practice through newly established Regional Improvement Partnership.

- 13 Department for Education data for the calendar year was released in the quarter, which demonstrate demand for new EHCPs has grown by 68% since 2019 in County Durham, more than national (+39%) and regional levels (+36%) over the same period.

### **Elective Home Education**

- 14 Numbers of children being home educated are rising locally, regionally, and nationally. In June 681 children and young people were home educated, an additional 51 since October 2022. The increase is less than that seen nationally, and the proportion remains low at 0.8% of school aged children.
- 15 Last year's Ofsted inspection of Children's services noted there are comprehensive systems in place to check that parents who elect to home educate are providing an appropriate education and where this is not the case, there is a robust response and issuing of return-to-school orders.
- 16 There is appropriate information on any potential safeguarding risks and vulnerabilities of pupils being home educated. This ensures that any potential risks are identified and well managed. County Durham continues to have a strong multi-agency Education at Home group that is well established, meets half-termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, and wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding. This continues to be monitored within the service.
- 17 County Durham's collaborative approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children electively home educated has recently been recognised by the national child safeguarding review panel who have approached the council for a case study for use in a national briefing.

## Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east
○	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east
×	more than 2% behind	S	Performance is the same as national or north east

### Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

### National Benchmarking (N)

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

### North East Benchmarking (NE)

The North East comparator is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk)

## Our Economy

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
% uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	93.7% (2022)	Tracker -	92.8% ✓			No
Improve the proportion of children achieving expected standards in maths and reading at KS2 in line with 2030 ambitions <sup>2</sup>	65% (2018/19)	Tracker -	67% x			No
Improve the average grade of achievement of all our pupils within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5 (in line with 2030 ambitions)	4.65 (21/22)	5 by 2030	new PI			Yes
Improve the educational attainment of our most disadvantaged cohorts to meet basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new PI	new PI	new PI			No
Increase proportion of young people in education, employment and training to be consistently higher than regional and national levels	94.7% (Mar 2023)	above N / NE x	87.4% ✓			Yes

## Our People

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development (reported as academic year)	64.5% (2021/22)	Tracker -	n/a	64.5%	64.1%	No
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – all	84.1% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	83.1% ✓	87.6% x	86.4% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – primary	93.9% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	90.9% ✓	94.1% x	Yes
% of pupils attending an Ofsted judged 'good or better' school – secondary	70% (at 13 Jul 23)	Tracker -	n/a	83.1% x	75.9% x	Yes

<sup>2</sup> Not reported for 2019/20 or 2020/21 academic years as no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments took place

Page 21

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
No. of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan	4,489 (Jun 2023)	Tracker -	4,038 -			Yes
No. of Children Looked After per 10,000 population	110 [1,119]	Tracker -	98	70	107	Yes
No. of Children in Need per 10,000 Population	340 [3,469]	Tracker -	344	334	445	Yes
No. of families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	983 (Apr-Jun 23)	1,230 [2023/24] ✓	581 ✓			Yes
Increase the % of children aged 4-5 who are of a healthy weight <sup>3</sup> <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	75.5% (2021/22)	90% x	not reported	x	✓	No
Increase the % of children aged 10-11 who are of a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	59.2% (2021/22)	79% x	not reported	x	✓	No

## Other Relevant Indicators

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:				Updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	N	NE	
Increase the % of 16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	7.1% (Mar 2023)	Tracker -	5.5% ✓			Yes
Reduce % point gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	18.7pp (2021/22)	Tracker -	17.4pp x		x	No
% of mothers smoking at time of delivery	15.2% (Jan-Mar 23)	0% x	14.8% x	x	x	Yes

<sup>3</sup> National Child Measurement Programme ceased March 2020 when schools closed due to the pandemic, therefore, North East and nearest neighbour comparators should be treated with caution due to missing data from some LAs. Whilst the data for the academic year 2020/21 has been published, local authority data is not available as only a 10% sample of data was recorded.

# Performance Summary Quarter 1, 2023/24



# Performance Summary Quarter 1, 2023/24

Following on from feedback from Members and services the corporate performance reporting is evolving with a new report format from Q1 2023/24. Key points to note:

- Suite of dashboards added (structured around specific service areas) which use greater data visualisation to provide more focus and greater transparency on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance.
- Retains a summary highlighting ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing’ for each theme, and a new executive summary has been added.
- Key metrics linked to high level 2023/27 Council Plan themes supplemented with service metrics increasing coverage.
- Merged with Customer Feedback Report.



# Developing Performance Management

- An organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of corporate and improvement plans.
- A corporate plan which is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account.
- Clear and effective mechanisms for scrutinising performance across all service areas. Performance is regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered.

# Going Well



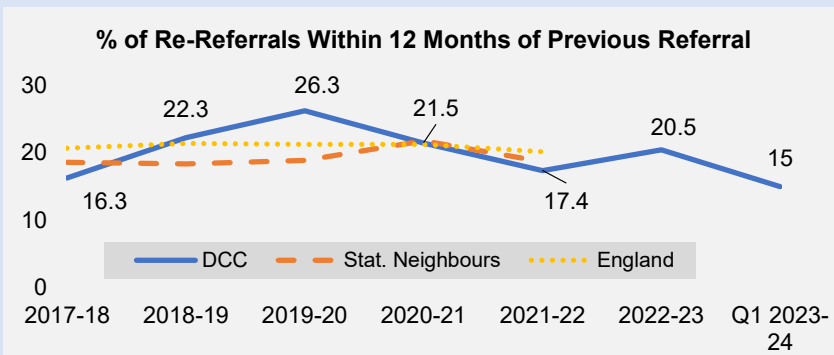
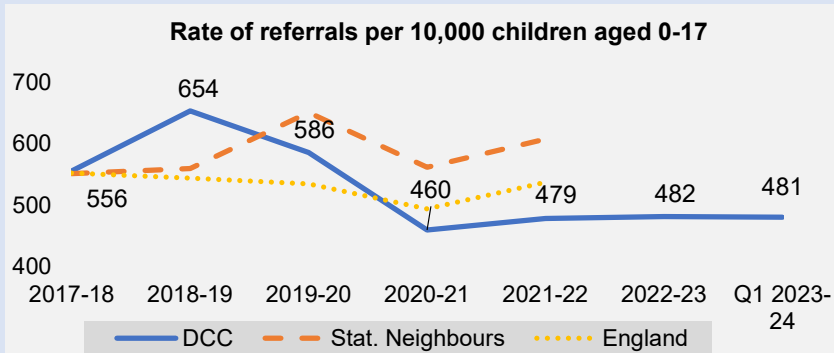
# Going Well

## Stronger Families programme

- On track to exceed target of helping 1,230 families by end of 2023/24 (80% achieved in Q1).

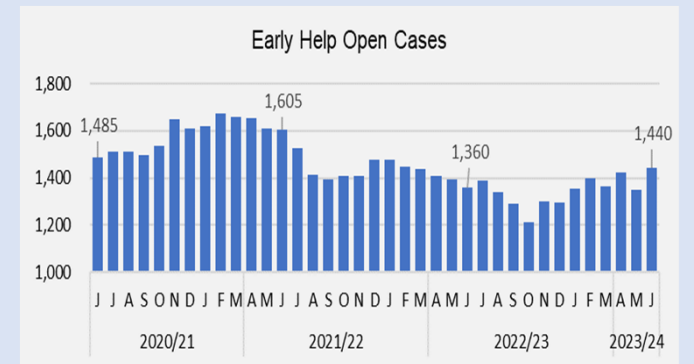
## Children's Social Care

- Front door demand remains at lower level.
- Helping to mitigate caseload pressures.
- Re-referral rates remain low.



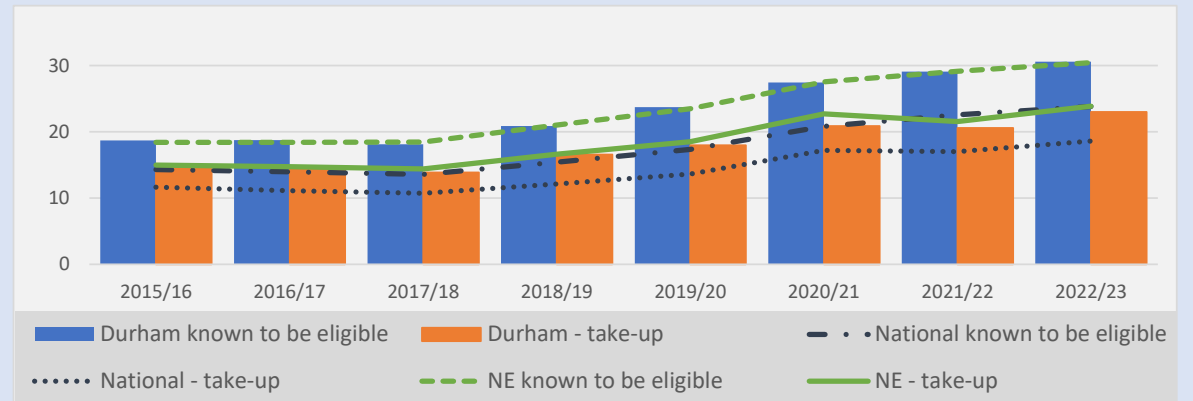
## Early Help

- Demand reduced post-COVID but started rising in October 2022.
- Feedback shows 87% of parents/carers are happy or very happy with support. As are 85% of young people.



## Free School Meals (FSM)

- Eligibility continues to rise with roll-out of universal credit and the cost-of-living.
- Take-up has increased to 23% from 20.6% last year, similar to NE (23.8%) and higher than national (18.8%).
- Gaps between those eligible and those taking up FSM on census day also continues to widen.



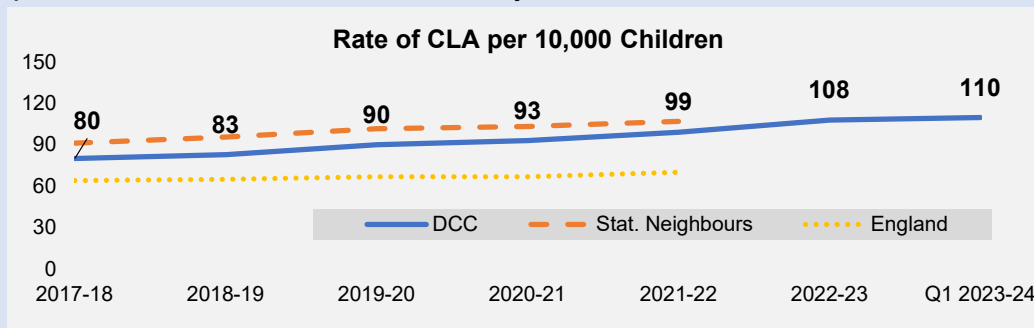
# Issues We Are Addressing



# Issues we are addressing

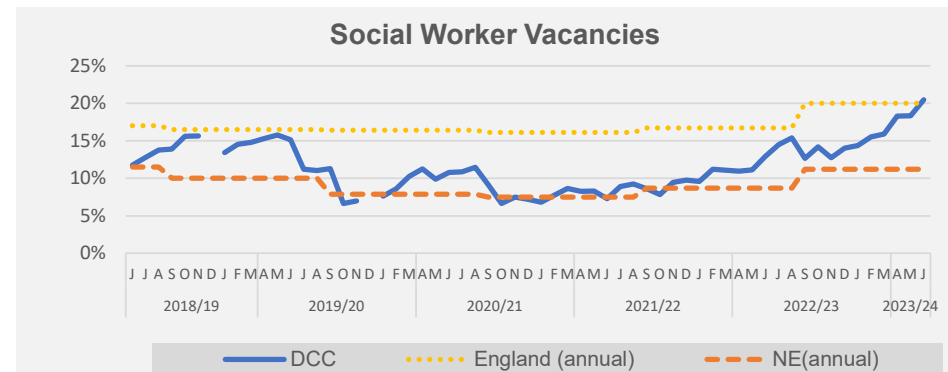
## Children in Care

- Increased number (currently 1,119) and changes in composition of children entering care.
- Pressures with suitable homes. Number in external residential care remains high – although growth has stopped in last six months.
- Significant overspend continues. Plans to increase capacity within our in-house children’s homes, recruit more foster carers, work with children and their families to prevent them entering care, and ensure high cost placements are reviewed effectively.



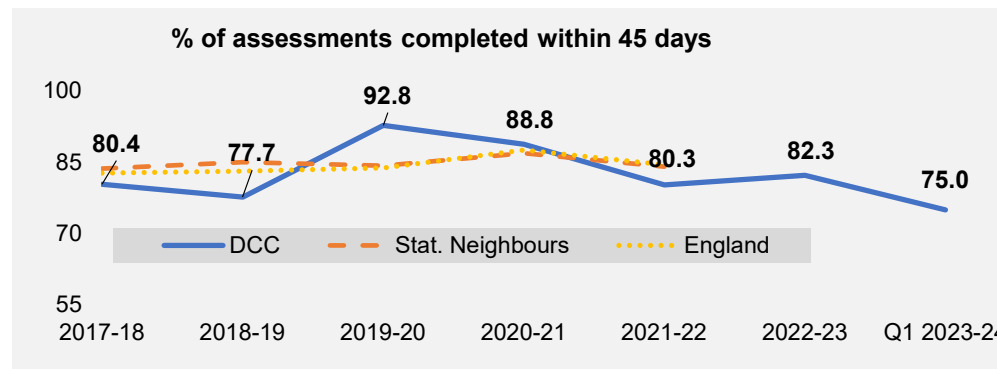
## CSC focused recruitment activity

- To build long-term social work capacity 8 external social workers starting soon and 40 new NQSW starting in September.
- Reduced caseloads since Q4 but more than 1 in 4 SW have a high caseload.



## Assessments completed within 45 days

- Timeliness reduced in Q1, most likely due to capacity issues.
- Average of 36 days to complete an assessment.

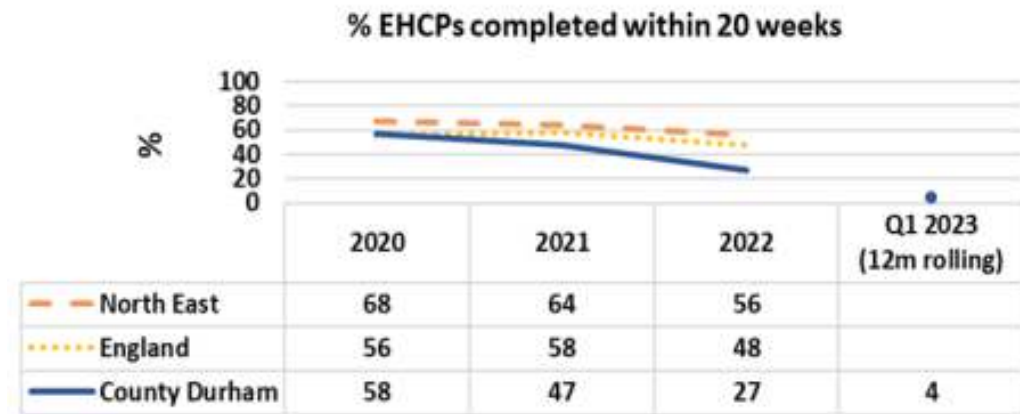
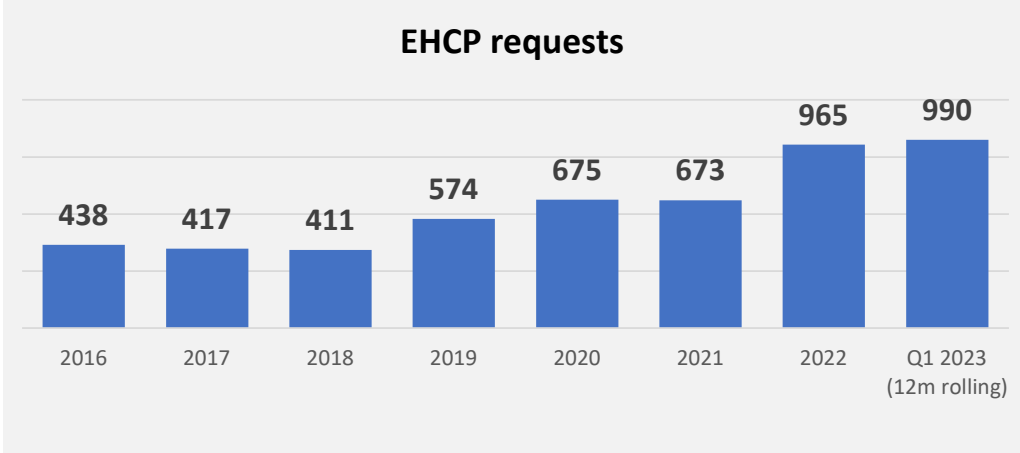


Our People

# Issues we are addressing

## Sustained growth in EHCP assessments (SEND):

- Significant increases in last few years (also evidenced nationally) possibly starting to plateau.
- 990 requests in rolling year to June: 2.5% more than 2022 and 72% more than pre-pandemic (2019).
- Pressures compounded by high demand in partner organisations, e.g. health, which is key part of the assessment process.
- Invested in and restructured our SEND casework teams and educational psychologists (of which there are national shortages).
- Increased demand is leading to difficulties meeting 20 week statutory timescale.
- 567 open assessments, 273 outside the 20 week timescale. Work programme in place to address this including locum support.



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

**22 September 2023**

### **TEWV CAMHS Waiting Time Information**

---

#### **Report of James Graham, General Manager – Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS**

##### **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 information on Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services waiting times.

##### **Background**

- 2 As at 08/09/2023 there are 195 patients waiting for a mental health assessment.
  - a. 94 of these waiting between 0-1 month
  - b. 52 of these waiting 1-2 month
  - c. 24 of these 2-3 months
  - d. 25 of these 3 months+
- 3 These waiting time compare favourably with national benchmarking data for CAMHS services.
- 4 Between Sep 2022-Aug 2023 (12 months) 5,014 referrals to the service were made within County Durham.
  - a. Average of 417 per month
  - b. 10,547 internal referrals happened in the same period (transfers to different teams/pathways)
  - c. 2,403 patients were fully discharged from service in this period
- 5 The County Durham service-wide caseload snapshot is 8,169 young people.
  - a. 4,383 are waiting for autism and/or ADHD assessment

- b. 2,528 are receiving support from a Getting More Help team (complex MH needs requiring MDT input)
  - c. 449 are receiving support from the Getting Help team (10-12 sessions of therapeutic intervention for mild-moderate MH needs)
  - d. 259 are currently having their needs screened by the single point of access (SPA)
  - e. 201 are receiving support from the learning disabilities teams
  - f. 163 are receiving 1:1 or group support from the Piece of Mind, school-based teams
  - g. 79 are receiving support from the SARC service (victims of sexual assault)
  - h. 50 are receiving support from the eating disorders team
  - i. 30 young people are receiving support from an out of area team (choice, or LAC placed out of area)
  - j. 12 young people are receiving support from crisis/intensive home treatment (IHT)
  - k. 4 young people with complex needs are accessing Holly unit (positive behaviour support)
  - l. 4 young people are receiving specialist assessment from the forensic team
  - m. 1 young person with complex needs is receiving intensive positive behaviour support (IPBS)
- 6 Note: the above is a 'unique' patient count. A significant number of the cases above will have periods of care when they are open to more than 1 team for 'co-working'. E.g., approx. 50% of the total caseload that is waiting for an autism/ADHD assessment is, or has been, open to another team for MH needs. The team the YP is 'counted' against is the team it was uniquely open to first.
- 7 Over 95% of YP who are urgently referred to the crisis team are seen within 4 hours.
- 8 The eating disorders service is compliant with national access standards (routine referrals treatment start within 4 weeks, and urgent refers seen within 1 week).
- 9 For neurodevelopmental assessments; there are 4,746 County Durham young people are waiting post-referral (difference to number quoted at 5(a) due to the 'coworking' issue described at 6)
- a. The average length of wait is 411 days
  - b. The maximum wait is 1,214 days
  - c. 3 YP waiting over 3 years
  - d. 921 YP waiting 2-3 years
  - e. 1,501 YP waiting 1-2 years
  - f. 422 YP waiting 9-12 months
  - g. 510 YP waiting 6-9 months
  - h. 600 YP waiting 3-6 months
  - i. 226 YP waiting 2-3 months



- j. 350 YP waiting 1-2 months
  - k. 214 YP waiting 0-1 month
- 10 The referral demand currently outstrips the clinical capacity for assessments 2 to 1, so the waiting list continues to grow. The team can complete 100 assessments per month, but 200 cases are added to the pathway per month.
  - 11 We predict that if nothing changes with capacity and demand in the next few years, a referral made in 12 months' time, will have a 5 year wait.
  - 12 If we stopped all referrals (some providers elsewhere and nationally have done this), within the current resource, it would take 3-4 years to clear the waiting list.
  - 13 Internal improvement work is under way, with pilots happening. At best this will increase our assessment capacity by 20-30% within current resource, within the next 6-12 months.
  - 14 This is a key area, strategically, within the NENC ICB with regional work underway to assess options and opportunities for recovery of this position. This issue is not unique to County Durham.
    - a. Includes risks and benefits appraisal of all possible options to increase capacity.
    - b. No easy answer as all parts of system are stretched.

## **Conclusion**

- 15 This report describes the position with regards to access to CAMHS services. Access to mental health support for needs ranging from mild-moderate-complex are generally reasonable and compare favourably with national benchmarking data.
- 16 There is a concern with regards to the capacity to meet, and demand for, neurodevelopmental assessments. Work is taking place local and regionally to explore all possible options at improving this position.

## **Background papers**

- None

## **Authors**

James Graham, CAMHS General Manager

This page is intentionally left blank