



Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Friday 26 April 2024

Time 9.30 am

Venue Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

Business

Part A

Items which are open to the public and press

Members of the public can ask questions with the Chair's agreement, and if registered to speak.

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Substitute Members
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 (Pages 3 - 18)
- 4 Declarations of Interest
- 5 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
- 6 Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
 - A) Report of Director of Public Health (Pages 19 - 46)
 - B) Presentation by Michelle Baldwin, Public Health Strategic Manager and Diane Foster, Public Health Practitioner (Pages 47 - 64)
- 7 Quarter 3: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24
- Joint Report of Corporate Director of Resources and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 65 - 80)
- 8 Quarter 3 2023/24 Performance Management Report
- Report of Chief Executive Officer (Pages 81 - 108)
- 9 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
18 April 2024

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, 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 Representative:

Mrs L Vollans

Parent Governor Representatives:

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska and Mr P Debrett-Watson

Co-opted Members:

Ms A Gunn

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269711

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 **Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Reed (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Cosslett, R Crute, S Deinali, J Griffiths, C Hunt, C Lines, L Mavin, M McGaun, D Mulholland, K Rooney, J Scurfield, C Varty and E Waldock

Parent Governor Representative:

Professor G Ciesielska

Co-opted Member:

Ms A Gunn

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members observed a minute's silence for Councillor Isabella Roberts, who sadly passed away recently.

The Chair spoke about Councillor Isabella Roberts, in particularly her involvement with the production of the film 'The Old Oak'.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Simmons, M Walton and Ms R Evans.

2 Substitute Members

No substitute Members were in attendance.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 December 2023, 8 January 2024 and 25 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

19 December 2023 – Minute 6, page 7, last paragraph – ‘dysphoria’ be amended to read ‘dyscalculia’.

4 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Deinali declared an Interest in Agenda Item No.6 – School Attendance and Inclusion as she has a child that is educated at home and remained in the meeting during consideration thereof.

5 Any Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer read out the following statement that had been received from Ms R Evans – Co-opted Member:

“I have informed the Overview and Scrutiny Team that I will be stepping down as coopted member after this meeting. I am finding it increasingly difficult to devote the time to the committee and think that it is time for a fresh face to take over. I am unable to attend today but hope that my comments might be read to the meeting.

In terms of the subjects of the meeting - school inclusion, performance, and home education - I know the tremendous work undertaken by Council departments and teachers, along with other staff in schools. However, there is a huge issue with how society nurtures our young people and the support and help it affords them. I do not believe that looking at individual statistics on inclusion, Ofsted reports etc goes much way to addressing these issues. There is a systemic problem in schools - in my view largely caused by academisation, resulting in lack of local accountability by families and the increasingly limited control of the democratically elected local Council. The support services for children and young people, including youth services, health services, careers services, leisure services (I could go on...), are non-existent or really difficult to access for most young people. This has happened after years of funding cuts. Another vital consideration is the overall levels of poverty in County Durham, with all the challenges this presents to families - and with the current cost of living crisis adding considerably to existing poverty. If we are to improve the lives of children, young people, and their families in County Durham we need a dramatic change in approach - and much of this is currently out of the Council's control. We must always do our best to improve the situation, and positive interventions are always worthwhile, but it is big, systemic changes that are also needed. I would hope that the Council is lobbying for such changes at every opportunity it has.

Finally, I would like to thank the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and particularly the staff team, who have supported me, as a member of the public, to engage with this committee. I send my very best wishes to you all.”

Councillor Crute asked that a letter be sent to Ms Evans on behalf of the Committee thanking her for her service to the Committee.

Members were advised that a letter of thanks would be sent to Ms Evans on Friday when her resignation comes into effect.

6 School Attendance and Inclusion

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided Members with an overview of school attendance and inclusion in the County Durham. The report also covered the national and local context and policy, published data and collaborative working (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer and the Inclusion & Alternative Provision Coordinator were in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that provided details of the overall absence; working together to improve attendance (May 2022); stepped approach; support from the Local Authority; work to date; attendance alliance; permanent exclusions by year group; primary permanent exclusions; secondary panel developments; main implications and areas for development (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer introduced the school attendance part of the presentation giving an outline on the current system, highlighting that there was new national guidance that would come into effect in September 2024. Members learned that a partnership approach was embedded to provide whole family support where needed. Where pupils had 50% attendance or less a multi-agency plan was required. In relation to legal action this option was only used where all support options were exhausted or not appropriate

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Group Lead informed members that the new guidance detailed information on the role of the local authority and regulations have been laid to mandate attendance data sharing by all schools so schools, LAs and Department for Education have access to near-live data from all state-funded schools from the beginning of next school year (Collecting this data at the previous termly census frequency created a two-term lag between the data being collected and being published). The voluntary national collection begun in 2022 and gathers a sub-set of that data. However, in County Durham, the majority of schools share data locally voluntarily.

Members were also advised that an attendance strategy was currently in development and of work that had taken place such as the development of the attendance alliance that was made up of multi-agency colleagues represented at the prevention and early help partnership and more widely. A multi-agency operational group also considers children who are electively home educated.

Information was given on the school portal which allows schools and education settings to access resources and share information.

School Attendance

Ms Gunn referred to the school attendance support team and asked what kind of coverage they were experiencing and their availability and if they were struggling to meet demand.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that there was high demand for the service, and whilst stretched the capacity in the team covers current statutory responsibilities alongside the alliance partnership approach. They had received some grant funding for children with a social worker through the virtual school to provide a focus on the attendance of children with a social worker and they had appointed an Education Welfare Officer to work with wider partners (developing a joint protocol and resource kit). They had also invested in a Vulnerable Groups Education Support Officer supporting those Electively Home Educated. They used the partnership approach to build capacity across the system.

The Head of Education and Skills indicated that when schools academised in 2011 their contribution was lost towards this service, more recently some of the academies were buying back into the service with Service Level Agreements. He added that there was high demand for the service and there were challenges, but the service was building capacity.

Councillor Varty indicated that some parents wanted to keep their children at home to look after other children. She continued that some children stay at home because they were frightened to attend school where they were living in domestic violent situations. She commented that these children needed to be fed when not at school which was a cost to parents and indicated that they needed to encourage free school meals take up more.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that there was a focus across the partnership to ensure they were highlighting the most vulnerable children and arrangements are in place around those young people, so they received the best support available.

In relation to domestic violence, an Education representatives supporting to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) considering high risk domestic abuse incidents are also part of the team that support school attendance, elective home education, children missing from education and this opportunity has meant information can be shared across the piece allowing connections to be made. The joint arrangements ensure that the partnership work is joined up around those concerns.

The Chair referred to children eligible for free school meals and asked if when a child was ill and unable to attend school and was going to be absent from school for a considerable amount of time was there any provision to ensure that the child was well fed.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that if children were prevented from attending school due to health needs, there is an Educational Health Needs Team who are able to help and support young people.

Councillor Hunt indicated that her local school had employed an attendance officer who engaged with children and families and the attendance for the school had improved. She then referred to school holidays, highlighting concerns as some schools now had different holiday periods which was creating problems for parents who had children in different schools.

The Head of Education and Skills responded that the service was aware of this, and it had impacted on attendance however, they had undertaken some work with other local authorities and the Roman Catholic Diocese on holiday realignment and advised that holidays next year would be aligned, and they were now consulting for the following year.

Councillor Hunt indicated that medical appointments were logged as an absence in some schools but in others it was not and asked for consistency of approach among schools.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that schools are guided by the national attendance and absence codes and indicated that there were some changes to some codes from September 2024 that may help. She continued that parents were encouraged to book medical appointments where possible outside of the school day. Where it was not possible, and a young person must be absent from school due to a medical appointment schools current registration regulations and corresponding guidance states this would be an (authorised) absence.

Councillor Hunt asked if this could be highlighted to the virtual school as some children had missed out on incentives due to medical absences.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer indicated that if a child are present at school for registration, the regulation state they receive their mark for the session even if they leave school later in the morning to attend an appointment.

Councillor Crute referred to the cohort of children on long term absence from school and asked how they identified those vulnerable children, specifically children with undiagnosed autism or awaiting an assessment who miss school regularly which impacts on their attainment and the risk of being permanently excluded. He then asked what mechanisms were in place to identify those children who might not have had an assessment for an Educational Health Care Plan.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer indicated that those young people where pupils have an Educational Health Care Plan (whether children are in special schools, mainstream or otherwise), the team work closely with the schools around attendance. She continued that targeting support meetings were held across all schools including special schools. For severe absentees, guidance suggests that children should have a muti agency plan in place. Often there may already be a multi-agency plan in place (some examples include an EHCP, child and family plan, child protection plan) with attendance as a thread running through this / as part of any existing multi-agency plan however if no wider multi-agency plan in place, guidance is clear that one should be put in place to support with wider barriers / ensure needs are met.

In response to a further question from Councillor Crute, the Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer indicated that cohorts of children and young people particularly those vulnerable and those persistently and severely absent are also considered at school targeting support meetings and there is wider consideration around themes / barriers that a number of schools / families are facing around how partners will work together via the alliance to assist.

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska indicated that a worry was focusing on the number of absences without looking at the reasons for the absence and deeper investigations in some cases were required as some families really needed support. However, some families were sending their children to school when they were unwell due to the worry of keeping them off school. She indicated that some guidance for parents around these issues would be beneficial. She then referred to medical appointments and indicated that sometimes parents had no influence on when the appointment takes place.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that the most common reason for absence was illness, there were also some absences for unauthorised reasons. Other wider reasons include holidays in term time and suspensions, but these reasons for absence represented small percentages.

Members were advised of a pilot exercise with local GPs, Public Health, Early Health and Family Health Service to look at sharing information between services where absences due to reported illness were frequent with a pattern of broken weeks with no underlying cause known. She continued that the government also had a national campaign focused on preventable absences currently. The Attendance Alliance received full breakdowns of absence by year groups, including information on reasons for absence, cohorts and groups on a half termly basis. The Access to Education/Vulnerable Group Lead assured members that reasons for absences and all available information is fully considered.

The Head of Education and Skills commented that this work was not just around the volume of absences and commented from a school point of view once a child got to year 11 the difference between the outcomes of a child that attends 98% of the time and a child who attends 92% was enormous and was potentially the difference of two grades across the eight subjects. He stated that secondary schools were struggling to ensure that all their year 11's were enjoying life, school was a nice place to be and stretching resources.

Councillor Waldock referred to where a family's attendance was spasmodic and were receiving targeted support and asked what support was given to the siblings of absentees and if a family approach was taken. She commented that some family's relationships had broken down and asked how they ensure that it does not impact on siblings.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that one of the key features of the attendance alliance work was to ensure that needs are considered holistically, and family centred and not just take into account the needs of one child, they were very much considering siblings. They worked with Early Help services with key workers providing support to the family, and services have worked to closely align the attendance strategy with the early help strategy. One of the work streams of the attendance alliance was parental engagement and promotion of the available offer from the Family Hubs and for example corresponding agencies holding drop-in sessions to enable families to access services within their community and respond to need was highlighted.

Councillor Scurfield referred to persistent absences and asked how this compared to previous years and if they had seen a decline.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer indicated that persistent absences had come down and the early indication was positive, but they still had some challenges.

In response to a further question from Councillor Scurfield the Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer indicated that absences were increasing before the pandemic and did increase to almost 9% but had come down nationally and locally particular in the last year.

Mrs Gunn referred to some special schools measuring engagement and asked who was required to report engagement.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer stated that the attendance systems that schools used were SIMS and Arbor that help schools manage the day-to-day attendance. Particularly secondary schools also make use of such applications to take lesson attendance and lesson monitor so can monitor engagement on a daily basis.

The Head of Education and Skills indicated that they could not enforce the process and stated that Ofsted measures engagement with the curriculum.

Councillor Mulholland asked about metrics to measure the percentage of children were living in poverty and if they were taken into consideration.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that they were, and they also look at their absences data by free school meals, vulnerable cohorts etc. that was reported to the attendance alliance to consider. Key partners from the attendance alliance worked with the service to support families and schools.

Durham Inclusion, Exclusion and Pupil Movement

The Inclusion and Alternative Provision Co-ordinator presented information to members that highlighted a significant increase in exclusions and suspensions both regionally and nationally, with some LA's reporting figures at the end of the Autumn term 23 were the same as what was recorded for the previous full academic year. In County Durham we have seen an increase but not at the same rates as other areas. Last year in County Durham 120 permanent exclusions were reported this was not significantly higher than the previous year's figures. He explained that key stage three was a key area of focus.

Members were advised there were four secondary panels that had a geographical split, and all schools were part of the panel with senior leaders from schools attending along with representatives from Early Help, EWEL, CAMHS, Educational Psychology and Anti Social Behaviour teams. Peer to peer support was given along with support from areas such as emotional wellbeing, Early Help, Outreach support, Alternative Provision and through the Inclusion Practitioner whose role also includes working with hard to engage parents and families.

The panels had seen a significant increase in referrals during 2022/23 a number of which were being picked up at an early stage as part of a graduated response.

Referring to primary schools the Alternative Provision Co-ordinator advised that there were no permanent exclusions during 2022/23 but it was anticipated that it would happen during this academic year creating pressure on the preventative offer currently in place.

Information was given on the primary pathway model where a triage system was in place and would offer advice, peer to peer support and put recommendations in place. Four Nurture Hubs provided support at the earliest stage and could support individual pupils for three sessions per week for up to three terms. All schools accessing the Nurture support would be expected to develop Nurture provisions within their schools this will increase capacity across the County. In relation to primary outreach work the service was looking to extend this. Work was being done to reduce the long term pressures on the High Needs Block (HNB).

Transition support was provided across key year groups, work was ongoing to identify pupils requiring support to ensure a successful transition into Primary and Secondary

All schools had agreed to sign up to the Alternative Provision framework and protocol. The LA also oversees a directory of providers. Providers have quality assurance checks to support their entry into the directory. The LA provides a training offer to AP providers with service level agreements in place to strengthen the offer.

The Alternative Provision Co-ordinator advised of the work taking place on reintegration of pupils. Forty young people were supported back into mainstream schools following permanent exclusion since May 21.

Supported Offsite Placements (SOP) had replaced the managed move protocol, the new process ensures moves are right for the young person. SOP's were managed robustly with a greater emphasis on the young person, which had increased successful outcomes.

A Fair Access Protocol had been implemented from September 23 to support the admission of young people who do not have a school place, the panels met weekly geographically, there were fair and transparent arrangements, thirty young people had gone through the system. Members were advised of the challenges involved with in year admissions process between schools, the LA continue to work with the DFE and school leaders.

Councillor Hunt asked if there were any reasons or patterns for exclusions.

The Inclusion and Alternative Provision Coordinator responded that historically persistent disruption was the main reason for exclusions but over the last few years exclusions for assaults against staff and other students had increased.

There was also had a number of incidents more recently in relation to dab and vape pens and were working with the police and services on this.

Councillor Hunt referred to the nurture hubs and asked who were funding these.

The Inclusion and Alternative Provision Coordinator responded that the funding was from the high needs block and was a small amount of money that had enhanced the offer as the hubs were already established.

The Head of Education and Skills indicated that a small allocation from the high needs block was allocated to support preventative work. If the exclusion number increased the costs to the Pupil Referral Unit would increase so they were trying with the school's direction to get ahead. The Head of Education and Skills advised that High Needs Block allocation to support the preventative work of the Primary and Secondary Panels was ahead of the game and would reduce higher long term costs. This had taken over five years to establish.

Councillor Hunt asked if match funding included academies.

The Head of Education and Skills confirmed this was the case and all schools had agreed to match funding over a three year period.

In response to a question from Mrs Gunn the Inclusion and Alternative Provision Coordinator indicated that the alternative provision directory had a range of different providers such as colleges, vocational and therapeutic intervention. The directory currently had approximately 36 providers. Regionally and nationally not all local authorities had a robust systems in place and leave any decisions around alternative provision to schools. There was encouragement to use provisions that were part of the directory that had been checked by Local Authority officers. On a monthly basis the Alternative Provision providers came together and held network meetings to share good practice and focus on areas for development. Alternative Provision is a key part of the education system supporting schools and individual young people.

Mrs Gunn indicated that this was an important part of SEND review and was the place to be looked at as a key priority and the fact that this was already being built upon was important. She asked how proactive they were to find new providers.

The Inclusion and Alternative Provision Coordinator responded that there were two parts to the alternative provision, and they had registered and unregistered providers. The unregistered providers could not offer a full time offer but could offer packages and interventions working in partnership with schools. The registered providers offer fulltime placements this was not directly available to parents and could only be accessed through school referral routes. He stated that new providers were coming on board to increase the options available to school.

In response to a further question from Mrs Gunn around the financial limitations and the legal implications prohibiting obtaining some of the funding the Head of Education and Skills responded that the allocation of money was to the panels, there was a business plan in place. Funding was from the High Needs Block to support the panels work it was not allocated to individuals. They were trying to do something different and 27 out of 29 secondary schools were academies with all schools part of the Behaviour and Inclusion Partnership. If some of the academies withdrew it would be difficult to continue, these panels were solution focused providing challenge, as well as professional development for everyone involved.

Councillor Varty indicated that it was positive to see everyone working together and would like to thank everyone.

Resolved: That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to school attendance and inclusion, and the proactive, collaborative actions being taken to address areas of challenge be noted.

Councillors Mulholland and Waldock left the meeting at 11.30 am

7 Schools Ofsted Update and Educational Attainment

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided Members with an update of recent Ofsted inspections of County Durham's maintained schools and educational outcomes in County Durham in 2023 (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Head of Education and Skills was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that focused on the Ofsted Inspections of the current academic year; Ofsted Inspections position currently for all schools; Ofsted Inspection Outcomes for different school categories and the summary outcome data for children in Durham Schools by Key Stage. He also provided details of Ofsted Inspections regime going forward (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

Ofsted Inspections

Members were advised that the new Chief Ofsted Inspector was Sir Martyn Oliver, who had local connections to the county. The new chief inspector would make changes in the inspection framework due to the intense pressure Ofsted inspections put on school managers. There would no longer be one word judgements, which may impact on making comparisons with previous years inspection judgements, it was also reported there was a lack of headship of the inspection process.

The Head of Education and Skills added that if a school had 50 in year transfers this provided a challenge to the school, but schools did well, there was a lot of 'good stuff' going on in schools and they would benefit from the changes to the inspection framework.

Referring to inspection outcomes for nursery and primary provision the aim was for all children to attend good or better provision and the figures would look better next year. The Head of Education and Skills advised that small primaries inspection outcomes had dipped and provided examples of reasons for this.

Focus then turned to secondary schools and members were advised that five secondaries were due for inspection and gave examples of two schools that should receive a better inspection outcome.

In relation to special schools the Ofsted inspection outcomes were on par with national figures and indicated that lots of special schools were not being inspected.

The Head of Education and Skills advised members that when he provides an update to committee next year, he will include comparisons with statistical neighbours.

Mrs Gunn commented that the context was important but not applied to special schools and those schools that had resources were able to manipulate the outcomes.

The Head of Education and Skills provided an example of Dean Academy, that had received a Requires Improvement Ofsted judgment at a previous inspection and at a recent inspection and received a good outcome, the school had unique challenges. They had 40/60 transfers coming in from different parts of Durham and the country and statistically if a child had moved schools three or more times, they would be 2.5 grades lower in all their 8 subjects at GCSE. Dean Academy were doing a good job and were still showing positive outcomes with these children that was now recognised by Ofsted.

Ofsted Inspections Outcomes

Moving to Educational Attainment the Head of Education and Skills advised in relation to primary data, previously County Durham was above regional and national data, but they were now lower. He added that he was not worried about this and that post COVID priorities had changed, and SATs were less important when compared to the welfare of the child. He expected that changes in the inspection framework relating to child welfare would be included. Maths was an issue and support was available via a service level agreement to provide support for schools and this would support children to achieve later in their educational attainment.

Information was given on Progress 8 which was a range of very academic subjects and young people were measured by their peers for performance. Aspects were doing well but the EBAC focussed on languages, humanities and sciences and some young people struggle. A range of tools had been removed from secondary schools, but the Head of Education and Skill advised he could see change coming. He explained the scoring of progress 8 and how the county was third regionally in terms of progress.

Referring to key stage five members were advised that Durham's schools and 6th form colleges had improved and were better than national figures in to attaining places in the Russel Group of universities.

Mrs Gunn asked what support was in place for leaders.

The Head of Education and Skills responded that they run school business manager networks. If they are a maintained school, they would visit the school three times as year.

In response to a question from Councillor Deinali the Head of Education and Skills stated that they were finding it hard to appoint Head Teachers of Secondary Schools. The Head of Education and Skill suggested that progress 8 was not a one size fit all but could be easily amended to be more inclusive.

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska asked if any support was provided to children to help them pick their subject choices and to understand how their subjects would impact on their choices for university.

The Head of Education and Skills responded that the 11-16 age group schools had an open door policy and let everyone in; 11-18 age group schools had less incentive to get everyone in and lose some of their pupils. There was an expectation on the breadth of offer and careers information that should be regulated and all those levels within careers that required an independent review of inclusivity in terms of the sixth form offer.

Resolved: That the report and presentation be noted.

Councillor Hunt left the meeting at 11.35 am

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska left meeting at 11.55 am

8 Elective Home Education

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services that provided Members with an overview of Elective Home Education in County Durham.

The report also covered the national and local context and policy, published data and collaborative working (for copy of report, see file of Minutes).

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer was in attendance to present the report and deliver a presentation that focused on the background; elective home education; local context; proactivity; intervention; information technology strand and impact (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

When comparing the number of children in the county who were educated at home this was 1% of the county's school age population and was lower than national figures.

Nationally numbers of children being educated at home had increased following the pandemic and this was reflected across county Durham too. Last year there was a rise of 18.9% nationally and it was 18% in county Durham.

Members were advised that the service met with parents to offer support. 12% of the cohort access local 14-16 college provisions part of the week to undertake English, maths and a vocational subject.

The service provide annual data trends to Head Teachers as part of a wider inclusion dashboard. There were also national links to share good practice and Operational and Strategic Panels

Contact was made with parents to offer support through various groups such as the equalities education team service who supported gypsy, roma, traveller ethnic groups given this group are overrepresented within the wider cohort and are likely to have already been known to families prior a decision to electively home educate. Bespoke help was offered where required and requested.

Regular reviews took place and the service ensured that the child's voice was heard by officers speaking with the child. Progression workers provided support to young people in years 10 and 11 and had contacts in colleges, training providers and apprenticeships.

Strategic Support Panel considered information geographically, by year group and reasons for elective home education. Those arrangements were deemed as best practice.

Members were advised that in the recent Ofsted inspection the services systems, strategies, response and safeguarding arrangements were reported to be well managed.

Councillor Scurfield referred to the system that captures the reasons for elective home education and asked what were the key themes and what actions were being taken if the reasons were what was happening in the school.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that the main reasons were parental preference following COVID and wished to continue with home education. She continued that children's mental health including anxiety were also reasons parents cited. Piece of Mind teams were funded by the NHS and worked closely with schools, colleges and wider partners around mental health and wellbeing. They treat mild to moderate mental health issues and had three teams across the county. There is a specialist nurse who purely works with those children who are electively home educated.

With regard to the reasons for home education, if this were due to the school practice if they did feel that there was any issue, they were proactive and would discuss this with the school. She commented that there had been sixty movers into the local authority who had decided to home educate, so they knew the trends and were proactive addressing these issues.

The Head of Education and Skills reassured Members that the data was shared across the schools and panels and found Panel members shared information and challenged each other around the data. The service would go direct to a Chief Executive of a Trust of a Headteacher if there were any concerns and would do this before they went to Ofsted or the Department for Education.

Mrs Gunn indicated that one of the key issues for her was looking at the underlying reason was more important and added mental health issues were usually due to another reason. She referred to the word 'chosen' and asked if parents were really choosing home education as they do not have a choice and asked at what point did dialogue with parents commence.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that the service initially receive reported reasons from schools and when meeting with parents they dig deeper around the reasons and triage full information at that stage. In terms of the word 'choice' this is national framework language around home education. She continued that the first dialogue would be within the first week or two weeks of the parent deciding to electively home educate their child. The guidance suggested that contact with parents was required once a year, but the service were in continuous dialogue with parents with a three-monthly review and had a named point of contact for the parent if they had any issues.

The Head of Education and Skills indicated that they decided to invest in this four years ago and offer more support than other local authorities.

Mrs Gunn indicated that a week or two into the process was too late.

The Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer responded that not all parents take them up on the offer of the meeting and indicated that contact was made with parents as quickly as possible, and usually make contact the next day to arrange that welcome meeting, however the meeting itself may not take place until a later date, and this is often led by when is convenient for the parent.

In response to a question from Councillor Varty the Access to Education / Vulnerable Groups Lead Officer advised the service was able to provide independent support to families to help with completing forms and accompanying them to meetings.

Resolved: That the overall position and direction of travel in relation to elective home education, and the collaborative help and support of a wide range of professionals to support families be noted.

9 Any Other Business

The Chair reminded Members of the following upcoming diary dates:

Special meeting on 20 March 2024 at 1.30pm focusing on Children's Social Care.

Visit to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub on 9 April (The Chair advised Members that places were limited and would be filled on a first come first served basis).

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

26 April 2024



**Children and Young People's Mental
Health and Emotional Wellbeing**

Amanda Healy, Director of Public Health

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update Overview and Scrutiny on the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership relating to the mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience of the children and young people within County Durham.

Executive summary

- 2 The importance of mental health and wellbeing of Children and Young People (CYP) is becoming increasingly recognised as the prevalence of mental health conditions in the CYP population is now 1:5 with no indication of reducing. This is a significant increase on the pre-pandemic rate of 1:9.
- 3 The challenges nationally and locally in relation to children and young people's mental health is significant.
- 4 There have been recent national developments which have significantly changed the landscape for CYP mental health and emotional wellbeing, this includes the Start for Life programme and development of family hubs, a senior mental health leads training offer for schools, and mental health support teams.
- 5 A significant amount of work is taking place locally to embed and develop this work and promote the existing support available to schools and in the wider community.
- 6 The governance arrangements for children and young people's mental health is through the Children and Young People's Mental Health

Partnership (CYPMHP). This is a multi-organisational group accountable to the Mental Health Strategic Partnership and County Durham Care Partnership.

- 7 A key focus of future planning is the importance of utilising the THRIVE framework so that children, young people and families receive the right support at the right time.

Recommendation(s)

- 8 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - (a) acknowledge and endorse the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership.
 - (b) Note the content of the report.

Background / Context

- 9 There are welcome recent developments which have significantly changed the landscape in relation to CYP mental health:
- Family Hubs which are open to all, and the Family Hubs work with families in navigating all aspects of family support including perinatal and infant mental health;
 - School settings where the DfE requires all schools have a senior mental health lead (SMHL) by 2025 and a DfE funded training programme is underway. Currently around 70% of school in the County have a SMHL in place or in training. Training continues to be delivered by the Emotional Wellbeing and Effective Learning (EWEL) team;
 - Mental Health Support Teams (MHST's), known locally as Piece of Mind (PoM), is an NHS funded programme of support provided to schools. This is a phased roll out of support with 30% of the pupil population initially supported by a PoM team rising to 40% in 2023/24 with a local evaluation undertaken.
- 10 In addition to the services which support CYPMH, the wider determinants of health have a significant impact on CYP health and the importance of CYP not living in poverty and having sufficient resources to be well fed, warm and supported to reach their potential by their families, local communities and services is emphasised.
- 11 Current high rates of child poverty are likely to be exacerbated by the current cost of living pressures and their impact on families and communities across the County.

National Context

- 12 The challenge in the UK associated with children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing is significant. The following key headline facts support this¹:
- In 2023, about 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 25 years had a probable mental disorder;
 - Having a probable mental disorder was more common for 11 to 16 year-olds (22.6%) than for those aged 8 to 10 years (15.7%)

¹ [MHCYP Wave 4 - Briefing Presentation \(Final\).pdf \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)

- 5.9% of children aged 8 to 16 years with a probable mental disorder had tried to harm themselves in the past 4 weeks;
- After a rise in prevalence between 2017 and 2020, rates of probable mental disorder remained stable in all age groups between 2022 and 2023;
- Among 8 to 16 year-olds, rates of probable mental disorder were similar for boys and girls, while for 17 to 25 year olds, rates were twice as high for young women than young men;
- Children aged 11 to 16 years with a probable mental disorder were more likely to have not exercised at all in the previous 7 days (17.2%) and it is well established physical activity is important for both physical and mental health;
- More than 1 in 4 children aged 8 to 16 years (26.8%) with a probable mental disorder had a parent who could not afford for their child to take part in activities outside school or college;
- Children aged 11 to 16 years with a probable mental disorder were 5 times more likely than those unlikely to have a mental disorder to have been bullied in person.

Local Population Needs

13 What we know about the population needs of children and young people in County Durham:

- There are around 105,600 children and young people aged under 19 living in County Durham. (ONS mid 2022 Population Estimates (based on the 2021 Census));
- County Durham is in the top 40% of the most deprived Local Authorities in England and around 1 in 5 (20.6% or around 18,100 children²) live in relative poverty (2022/23);
- Disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances represent a significant risk within children for developing poor health, including persistent mental health difficulties extending into adulthood and reduced life opportunities;
- 3.6% of school children have additional, social, emotional, and mental health needs which equates to over 2,600 children. The

² [Children in Low Income Families: local area statistics, United Kingdom, financial years ending \(FYE\) 2015 to 2023, Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\)](#)

prevalence of emotional difficulties is increasing and is largely attributed to increased levels of anxiety;

- 14.6% of pupils, around 11,200, receive Special Educational Needs support (2022/23), and around 3,000 school children have an Education, Health and Care Plan. 20% of these pupils requiring support have a primary need relating to social, emotional or mental health need;
- Hospital admission rates for mental health conditions (0-17 years) and self-harm in County Durham were statistically significantly higher than England for 2022/23.

Child Health Profiles

14 The child and maternal health profiles produced by the Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities (OHID) and published on the OHID Fingertips website provide a snapshot of child health in upper-tier local authority areas. They bring together indicators for local government areas across several different themes.

15 The profiles are designed to help local decision makers understand the health needs of their community and support work to:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Reduce health inequalities.

16 The profiles can also be used to help local decision makers:

- Work with local partners to plan and commission evidence-based child health services based on local need;
- Compare areas with national and regional averages to identify areas for improvement;
- Compare areas with statistical neighbours to learn from areas with better outcomes.

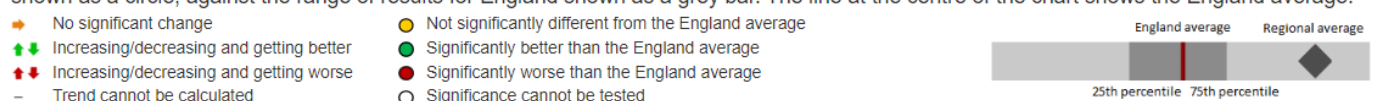
17 The 2023 Child Health Profiles were published by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) in April 2023 with the overall summary that:

- Overall, comparing local indicators with England averages, the health and wellbeing of children in County Durham is worse than England.

The findings of the 2023 OHID Child Health Profile were presented to the Starting Well Partnership Board. Of particular note were the indicators relating to hospital admissions (based on 2021/22 data) for mental health conditions (aged 0-17 years) and self-harm (10-24 years) which showed County Durham as statistically significantly worse than the national average (and in the worst quartile of local authorities). **Table 1.** Selected measures from the County Durham Child Health Profile 2023, OHID.

Overview of Child Health

The chart below shows how children's health and wellbeing in this area compares with the rest of England. The local result for each indicator is shown as a circle, against the range of results for England shown as a grey bar. The line at the centre of the chart shows the England average.

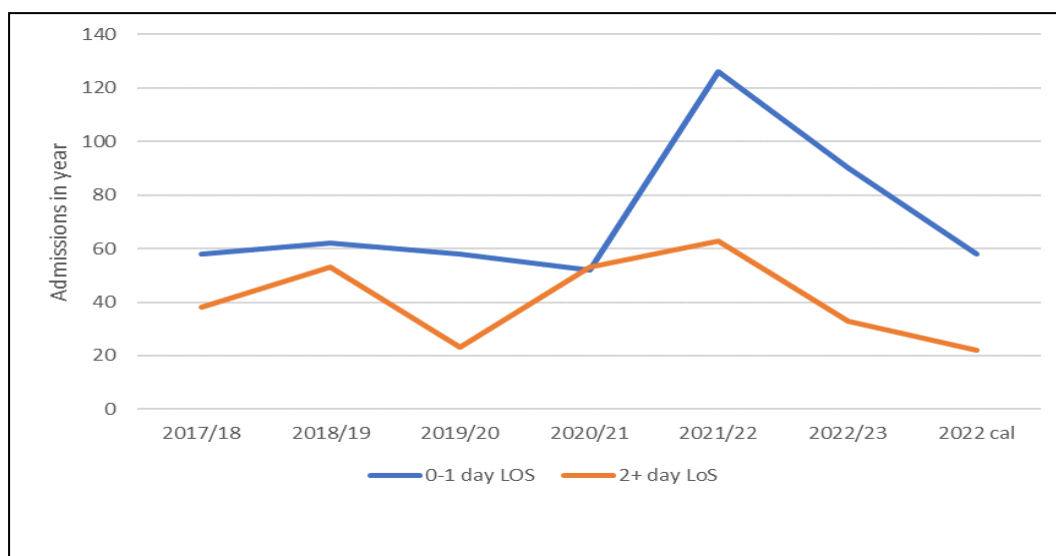


Indicator	Recent trend	Local number per year*	Local value	England average	England worst	England average	Regional average	England best
31 Hospital admissions for mental health conditions	–	185	186.9	99.8	355.1			33.3
32 Hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (10-24 years)	–	555	591.2	427.3	1,051.7			127.6

- The Board requested that further analysis into the specific measures relating to hospital admissions for mental health conditions, self-harm (and injuries) be undertaken by the Joint Strategic Needs and Asset Assessment Insight and Delivery Group (JSSNA IDG).
- For mental health admissions (0-17 years) the rate had increased from 78.8 per 100,000 in 2019/20 to 186.9 per 100,000 in 2021/22 and had moved from not statistically significantly different to England to statistically significantly higher than England. The 2021/22 rate in County Durham was also statistically higher than the North East (but not statistically significantly different to 6 other North East Local Authorities).
- Further analysis for the JSNAA IDG undertaken by colleagues from the NECSU (North of England Commissioning Support Unit) showed that admissions for mental health conditions (aged 0-17 years) have decreased significantly in County Durham from the spike seen in 2021/22, particularly for admissions at University Hospital of North Durham (UHND) without an overnight stay i.e., 0–1-day length of stay (LoS). This suggests variation around provider pathways and recording in hospital rather than solely being down to fewer incidents of harm

caused by mental health conditions. It is important to note that these admissions are now similar to pre-COVID levels (figure 1).

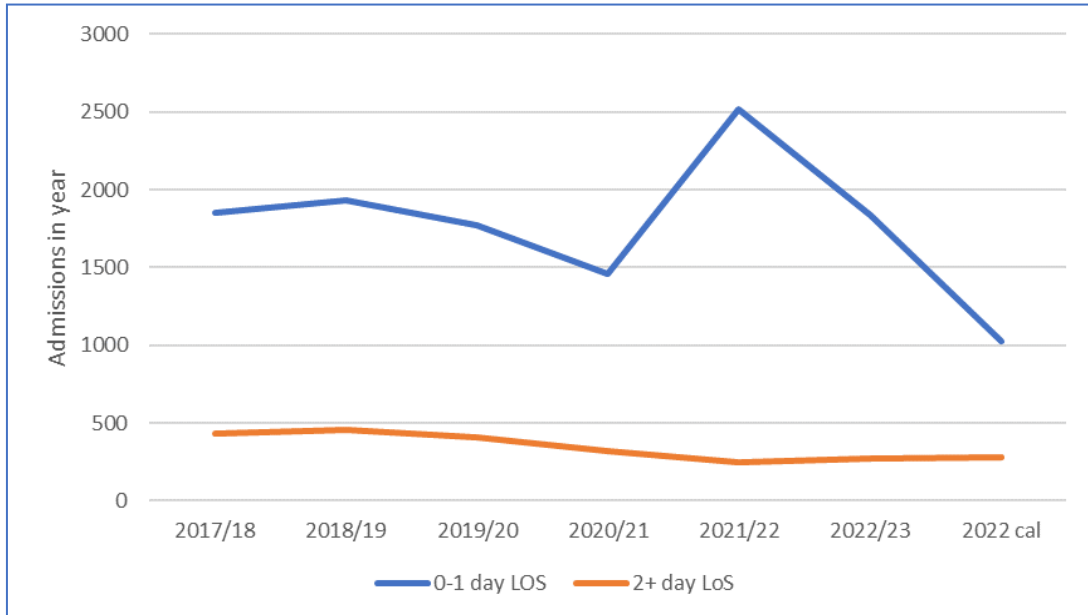
Figure 1: Count of admissions for mental health conditions aged 0-17 per 100,000 by length of stay, 2017/18 to 2022/23 (and 2022 calendar year for illustrative purposes). County Durham. Source: SUS, NECS.



21 The online Child Health Profile has recently been updated with data covering 2022/23. The CYP mental health admission rate for 2022/23 has decreased from 186.9 per 100,000 in 2021/22 to 135.6 per 100,000. This remains statistically significantly higher than England (80.8) and the North East (98.8) but relates to 135 admissions in the year. Removing zero length of stay admissions would reduce the number of admissions further.

22 Further analysis by North East commissioning support unit (NECSU) via the Joint Strategic Needs and Asset (JSNAA) insight development group, showed deliberate self-harm admissions have decreased significantly in County Durham from the spike seen in 2021/22, particularly for admissions at UHND without an overnight stay (which again suggests variation around provider pathways and recording in hospital rather than solely being down to fewer incidents of self-harm). These admissions are now lower than pre-COVID levels.

Figure 2: Count of admissions for deliberate self-harm (aged 10-24 years), by Length of Stay (LoS), 2017/18 to 2022/23 (and 2023 calendar year for illustrative purposes), County Durham. Source. SUS, NECS.



- 23 The updated online County Durham Child Health profile shows the rate of self-harm admissions aged 10-24 years for 2022/23 has fallen from 591.2 per 100,000 in 2021/22 to 276.6 per 100,000. This is statistically significantly lower than England (319/100,000) and the North East (461.2/100,000). The rate for England has fallen significantly in addition, and the time series has been removed from OHIDs Fingertips online tool, so it is possible there was an issue with the underlying numerators or denominators. A query has been lodged with OHID regarding this.
- 24 From additional analyses of hospital admissions data undertaken by NECS colleagues, it is clear that while admissions for injuries, mental health conditions and self-harm in younger people may be relatively high in County Durham compared to the England average, at least part of that difference relates to how care is recorded at University Hospital of North Durham. The introduction of Observation Beds, whilst clinically being the right action to take in terms of the optimal patient care pathway, had an unintended consequence of increasing headline admission numbers and rates. Taking this into account, County Durham is no longer likely to be such an extreme outlier on these indicators, but like most of its peer group comparators has injury admission rates higher than the England average.

National and Local Drivers

25 The importance of mental health and wellbeing of Children and Young People is becoming increasingly recognised and this is reflected in both national and local policies and strategies.

26 Children and Young People's Mental Health (LGA 2023)³.

The report makes recommendations to be considered by the LGA, councils, regional bodies, and national government to take forward positive and lasting changes. The report recognises that prevention can play a crucial role in addressing the social factors and stressors that can impact health on a population level and recommendations for change.

27 Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing A whole school or college approach (PHE; DfE, 2021)⁴:

This document describes 8 principles of a whole school or college approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing which, if applied consistently and comprehensively, will help contribute towards protecting and promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The senior mental health leads (SMHL) in schools have a key role in ensuring this is delivered in their schools.

28 No child left behind A public health informed approach to improving outcomes for vulnerable children (PHE, 2020)⁵

A public health informed approach looks at the factors for individual children, their families and the communities in which they live that make it more or less likely that vulnerability and adversity in childhood has a lasting impact on their lives. This holistic, multi-agency approach addresses inequality and the broader causes of vulnerability which might otherwise be overlooked.

³ <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/children-and-young-people/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/614cc965d3bf7f718518029c/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_and_wellbeing.pdf

⁵ <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2020/09/02/no-child-left-behind-a-public-health-informed-approach-to-improving-outcomes-for-vulnerable-children/>

- 29 Growing Up in County Durham Strategy 2023-25 (County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board)

The Growing Up in County Durham Strategy 2023-25 is a high level partnership plan which explains what we are going to do to achieve our vision for children, young people and their families. Our vision is: County Durham supports all children, young people and their families to achieve their goals in life, in an environment that is safe, happy and healthy.

- 30 County Durham's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28 (County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board).

- 31 The strategy outlines a vision for improving health and wellbeing and addressing health inequalities across the life course in the county (all ages). The JLHWS is a document that informs and influences decisions about health and social care services in County Durham, so that they are focused on the needs of the people who use them and tackle the factors that affect health and wellbeing. These include making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health, resilience and wellbeing, and reducing alcohol harms.

- 32 NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019)⁶

This restated the Government's commitment to deliver the recommendations in The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health and sets out further measures to improve the provision of, and access to, mental health services for children and young people.

- 33 Family Hubs and Start for Life programme (Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education, 2023)⁷

This programme aims to join up and enhance services delivered through transformed family hubs in local authority areas, ensuring all families can access the support they need.

⁶ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme>

- 34 The County Durham Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help for Children, Young People and Families (Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council)

This strategy sets out Durham County Council's partnership vision, priorities and approach for providing effective, targeted and coordinated 'Early Help' in County Durham in order to promote opportunity, address inequalities and secure better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- 35 SEND Strategy for County Durham Local Area Partnership 2022 – 2024

This is our local strategy for children, young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) It enables us to understand what we need to do together to make sure that children and young people with SEND are fully included in our communities, that we work together to achieve this vision, and what we can each contribute.

THRIVE Framework

- 36 Thrive is an integrated, person-centred and needs-led approach to delivering mental health services for children, young people and families which conceptualises need in five categories or needs based groups: Thriving, Getting Advice, Getting Help, Getting More Help and Getting Risk Support.



Thriving

- This category refers to children and young people who are doing well mental wellbeing, emotional wellbeing and social wellbeing but may need some effective prevention and resilience-based strategies to support with the ups and downs in life.

Getting Advice

- This category includes children and young people who need advice and direction. It covers those facing mild or temporary difficulties and those dealing with ongoing severe problems but managing their mental wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and social wellbeing independently.

Getting Help

- This category includes children and young people who need specific time limited help for mental wellbeing, emotional wellbeing or social wellbeing focusing on agreed-upon outcomes. It involves professionals taking direct responsibility to assist individuals or groups.

Getting More Help

- Getting More Help is similar, to Getting Help but covers approximately only 1% of children and young people. It is a separate needs-based intensive support offer with individuals requiring more support with a collaborative approach if more than one service is involved in their care. It can include those children and young people that

were unable to achieve the goals as part of the Getting Help support. It might also include children with a range of overlapping needs that mean they may require greater input, such as the coexistence of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), major trauma or broken attachments.

Getting Risk Support

- This category refers to those who have not benefitted from or are unable to use help but are of such a risk that they are still in contact with services. The aim of Getting Risk Support is for all partners to be clear that what is being provided is managing risk only.

37 The mental health service provision and support offer for County Durham has been aligned to the Thrive model to ensure clarity of focus and ensure a system wide offer that meets the needs of our children and young people.

What are we doing to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health in County Durham?

Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership

- 38 The Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership (CYPMHP) is a multi-organisational group accountable to the Mental Health Strategic Partnership and County Durham Children Young People and Families Partnership.
- 39 CYPMHP adopts the approach to wellbeing to ensure that the voice of children, young people, and their families is included within all areas of the work of the partnership this is supported by the recruitment of experts by experience. This includes a young person and parent as independent co-chairs to work alongside the Professional Chair. Their role is to:
- scrutinise the work of the CYPMHP to ensure the needs of County Durham CYP are being met;
 - bring your own knowledge and experience of CYP mental health ;
 - ensure there is effective challenge to the CYPMHP and that this challenge is constructive to support CYP and aligns with the vision of the CYP Partnership;
 - act as a non-party-political voice for children and young people who reside within County Durham
- 40 The Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership (CYPMHP) has outlined a strategic action plan aimed at enhancing emotional wellbeing and mental health support across County Durham. Here's a breakdown of the aims and their respective functions:

Aim 1: We will be united in voices and drive participation and engagement from CYP and families across all aspects of mental health and emotional wellbeing.

This fosters collaboration and participation among children, young people, families, and professionals to inform service development and quality improvement. It also empowers services to be inclusive, culturally responsive, and developed in co-production with those with lived experience.

Aim 2: Work together to develop whole communities (including all sectors, settings and communities) to be skilled competent and confident to talk about mental health, understand mental health and emotional wellbeing issues and the support options available.

This strengthens public awareness and community capacity-building to reduce stigma and promote positive wellbeing while empowering individuals and communities to recognise and address mental health issues early, thus minimising long-term impacts.

Aim 3: Work together to develop a coordinated and comprehensive mental health and emotional wellbeing offer to support children, young people and families that is easy to access. Based on the THRIVE model.

This provides an accessible and coordinated mental health and emotional wellbeing support system based on the THRIVE model. It also ensures that services are person-centred, flexible, and easily accessible, matching needs to the right level of support.

Aim 4: Work together to drive universal and targeted resilience, prevention and early intervention across County Durham, starting from early years, through childhood and the transition into adulthood.

It is important that we implement universal and targeted resilience-building, prevention, and early intervention strategies from early years to adulthood and that we provide tailored support based on individual needs, facilitate smooth transitions between services, and prevent the escalation of mental health needs.

41 The CYPMHP has an action plan aligned to these aims and is committed to its delivery. These aims emphasise the importance of supporting children to achieve their potential, ensuring continuity of support for those with additional needs, and prioritising integration of services with children, young people, and families at the centre of decision-making.

42 The governance of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership, terms of reference and action plan are reviewed regularly to ensure that there is representation from all key stakeholders to deliver on specific actions.

Support for Education Settings

- 43 Early intervention to identify issues and provide effective support for children and young people's mental health is crucial. As part of a public health response, there is increasing emphasis on universal prevention work delivered in school settings.
- 44 Schools have an important role in supporting and promoting mental health and wellbeing, this can be summarised as:
- Prevention: creating a safe and calm environment where mental health problems are less likely, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school population, and equipping pupils to be resilient so that they can manage the normal stress of life effectively. This will include teaching pupils about mental wellbeing and the importance of the five ways to wellbeing through the curriculum and reinforcing this teaching through school activities and ethos.
 - Identification: recognising emerging issues as early and accurately as possible
 - Early support: helping pupils to access evidence based early support and interventions. This includes support from the ERN Team which is available to all schools and PoM team for the 40% of schools which have access to this intervention.
 - Access to specialist support: working effectively with external agencies to provide swift access or referrals to specialist support and treatment including CAMHS.
- 45 To promote positive mental health, it is important that schools understand the protective factors that can enable pupils to be resilient when they encounter problems and challenges. The role that schools play in promoting the resilience of their pupils is particularly important for children with less supportive home lives, who may not have a trusted adult they can talk to. Schools should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems.
- 46 Public Health commission/jointly commission a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based programmes and interventions to support schools. This support offer is promoted to education settings through

regular communications with schools, through the new schools extranet and at a recent event.

- **Health and Wellbeing Framework**

The Health and Wellbeing Framework provides structure and guidance for schools and education settings to enable the promotion and development of good health and wellbeing. The framework is underpinned by a resilience-based approach and aims to support education settings to look holistically at the mental, physical, and emotional health and wellbeing of the whole setting population.

- **Anxious About School Project**

The Anxious About School Project (AASP) aims to support young people who struggle to engage in school because of heightened anxiety in relation to being in school, or the thought of school; and an inconsistent or limiting pattern of attendance, or engagement in appropriate learning opportunities. The project supports children and young people to remain in school with programmes such as FEARless delivered by the One Point Service

- **The Durham Resilience Programme (DRP)**

The DRP is a whole setting approach that aims to raise awareness of the importance of developing and supporting resilience across school communities. Through participation in the programme, schools are supported to develop, implement, and review a bespoke action plan to ensure a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

- **YAM**

Youth Aware of Mental Health, or YAM, is a universal evidence-based mental health promotion program for young people aged 14-16 (Year 9 pupils). It uses PowerPoint presentations, group discussion and role-play activities to raise mental health awareness, covering everyday dilemmas, stress and crisis situations, and depression and suicide.

- **NOW**

Nurturing Our Wellbeing, or NOW, was developed following the success of the YAM project and in response to feedback from Year 9 pupils who felt it would be useful to learn more about mental health earlier in their schooling. This program is available to primary schools.

- **Senior Mental Health Lead (SMHL) Training**

All schools are expected to have a member of staff trained as a SMHL by 2025. This training course is specific to County Durham and has been quality assured by the DfE. It provides schools with the appropriate strategies, tools, resources, and networks to plan for, implement and sustain an effective whole school or college approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

- **The Emotional Health and Resilience Team (EHRT)**

This service is delivered by Harrogate and District Foundation Trust and provides low-level, short-term support and intervention for children, and young people who are beginning to display/experience early signs of emotional difficulty and who are experiencing low to moderate mental health concerns. Support is universal and available to all schools and can provide individual, group and classroom based, or whole school support.

- **Piece of Mind Team (PoM) Mental Health Support Teams**

Delivered by Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) in around 40% of County Durham schools. The Piece of Mind Teams offer early intervention for children, young people and their families struggling with mild to moderate mental health/emotional difficulties. Mental Health Support Teams can offer individual, group and classroom-based interventions and can support schools with their whole school approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing.

- 47 Some of the challenges of the education support offer is that parts of the offer can only be delivered to a limited number of schools during an academic year. Public Health are currently reviewing this offer to ensure that there is an equitable universal offer available to all schools.
- 48 A Health Equity Audit has been completed as part of the Children and Young People's Mental Health review to identify which programmes each school engages. The data from the Health Equity Audit ensures a targeted approach to promoting the support offer to specific schools and avoids any duplication. The audit will be completed annually.

Other support for children, young people, and their families.

49 Consett Locality Pilot

Following feedback from young people, their families and a range of stakeholders consistently suggesting that the mental health support offer was difficult to understand and navigate. This often resulted in inappropriate referrals and delays in young people accessing the right support they need.

Consett Locality Pilot aims to explore ways of improving this situation from an experience and outcomes perspective using these four areas of focus .

- Improve understanding of the mental health support available across all stakeholder groups.
- Strengthen existing mechanisms for navigating young people and their families to the right support, in the right place and at the right time.
- Clarify the obstacles that need to be overcome to ensure this happens sustainably over time.
- Ensure groups that don't currently get good access to support are factored into future planning.

The outcomes of the pilot will be used to share best practice and lessons learnt across support services within the CYPMH Partnership and will be used to inform future planning.

50 Healthy Child Programme (0-25 Family Health Service)

The 0-25 Family Health Service team deliver on the Healthy Child Programme and early help and support. The team offer a range of support to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people. This can include support with key transition points including starting or moving schools and colleges. Support for children and families who have additional and complex needs and support for low-level emotional health issues, and support to access adult services.

51 Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme

Family Hubs support families, during pregnancy, through their child's early years and into school. They offer a range of activities, groups and

programmes for parents and carers to attend as well as for children and young people. Examples include saying safe and healthy, family relationships, support for dads to be, courses and groups for families of children with special educational needs and disabilities, toddler and me and baby and me, infant feeding support, emotional wellbeing support for CYP and families⁸. These activities and programmes are designed to;

- Support families to understand their child/teenager's behaviour;
- Support families with their child's wellbeing;
- Support families with their child's additional needs;
- Support families and their child's health.

52 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCS)

County Durham has a vibrant and active VCS that is being recognised as a key contributing factor to supporting our children, young people, and families with mental health and emotional wellbeing. The VCS provision in County Durham is ever changing so it can be difficult for practitioners to navigate.

The County Durham VCS Alliance is a resource for professionals who develop new relationships between VCS provision, Children's Services and key partner organisations to better support children, young people, and families through accessing a broad range of VCS projects, activities and interventions.

53 Rainbow Guides

To ensure that children and young people have a resource which is an easy-to-use guide as a starting point to access support for mental health and emotional wellbeing the Rainbow Guides were developed. These guides are reviewed every 6 months and a Christmas edition is produced. The Rainbow Guides are used by professionals, children, young people, and families and are widely available. They are regularly circulated to GP practices, schools, voluntary sector organisations and key stakeholders for circulation to the wider community (appendix 4).

⁸ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2354/Family-Hubs>

54 Examples of Recent work include:

- Recruitment of a parent carer and young person as Co-Chairs for the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership.
- Roll out of a fourth Mental Health Support Team (Piece of Mind) to cover additional schools in Bishop Auckland and Chester-Le-Street areas.
- Complete a Health Needs Assessment for Children and Young Peoples Mental Health.
- Completed Health Equity Audit identifying the mental health support accessed by schools across the County meaning we can support schools to engage where this is indicated.
- Successful event promoting of the Durham Mental Health Offer for schools.
- Increased school and support services sign up to the Emotional Wellbeing Forums
- Delivery of a Health and Wellbeing Framework and Durham Resilience Programme Learning Event
- The development of the Anxious about Schools Guidance for all schools
- The development of critical incident guidance and a standard operating procedure to ensure a co-ordinated approach for schools if an incident occurs.
- Children and young people delivered a staff awareness session on World Mental Health Day
- Continued partnership working across the system including the Consett Locality Pilot and Family Hubs

Next Steps

- 55 The CYP Mental Health Partnership will continue to promote awareness of the support available for children, young people, and families across the system with a key focus on supporting young people to continue to thrive and become resilient, with prevention and early interventions.
- 56 Continue to promote awareness of the support available within schools and the wider community to support children, young people, and families with mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- 57 Continually listen to our CYP to understand their needs and review our service offer to ensure that children, young people, and families receive person centred and needs led support with the right support at the right time.

- 58 The support available to schools is currently under review with a focus on ensuring that there is equity across all schools in County Durham and that services provide interventions that link to the Thriving, Getting Advice and Getting Help categories of the Thrive framework.

Conclusion

- 59 The social, emotional, and mental health of our children and young people continues to be a key area of focus and a cross cutting priority that should be considered across all services and key stakeholders.
- 60 From additional analyses of hospital admissions data undertaken, it is clear that while admissions for mental health conditions and self-harm in younger people in 2021/22 may be relatively high in County Durham compared to the England average, at least part of that difference relates to how care is recorded at University Hospital of North Durham. The introduction of Observation Beds, whilst clinically being the right action to take in terms of the optimal patient care pathway, had an unintended consequence of increasing headline admission numbers and rates.
- 61 The CYPMH Partnership will continue to work together to further develop the plan and deliver against the priority areas.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

The County Durham Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership plan sets strategic context within which financial plans are set.

Consultation and Engagement

The voice of children, young people and families are part of the CYPMH Partnership and Co-Chairs. Co Production and the use of the approach to wellbeing are included within the CYPMH Partnership plans.

The plan sets out the consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Group pays particular regard to the needs of vulnerable groups protected under equalities legislation.

Climate Change

Not applicable

Human Rights

In placing an emphasis on engaging with children and young people and their families in shaping support services, the strategy promotes and protects the human rights of those in receipt of services and support.

Crime and Disorder

The strategy includes a focus on the safety of children and young people.

Staffing

Plans include strengthening staff development.

Accommodation

Not applicable

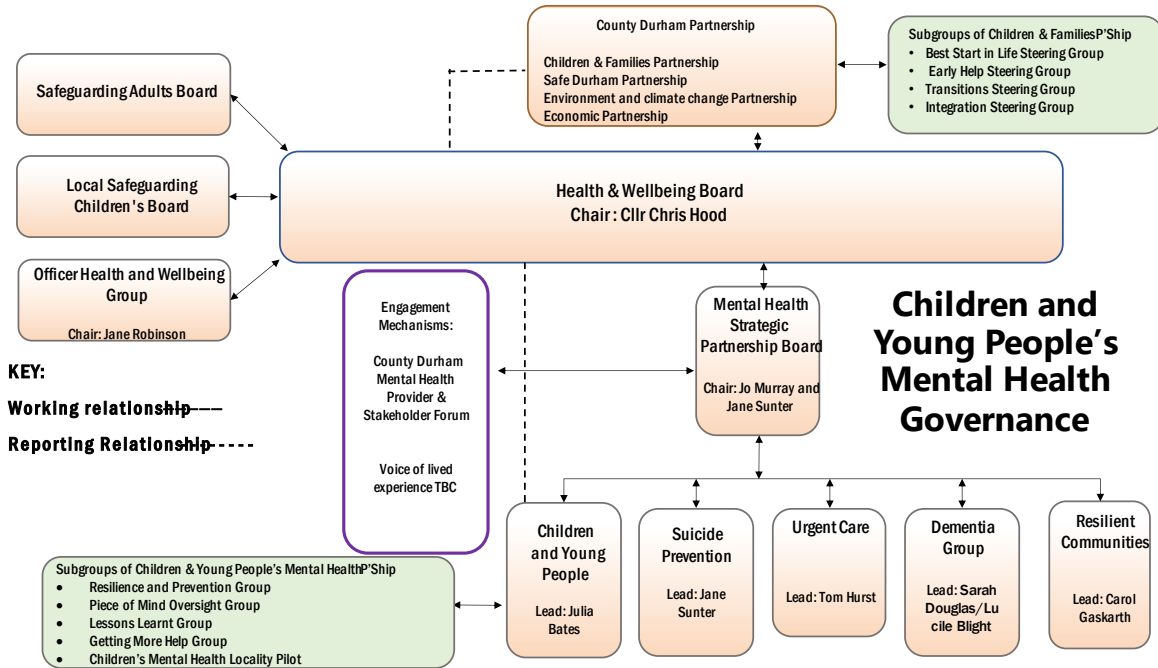
Risk

Risks mainly relate to reputational risks should a strong strategic framework for improving children and young people's services in the County not be clearly articulated. If services do not improve children and young people will not receive the right support at the right time.

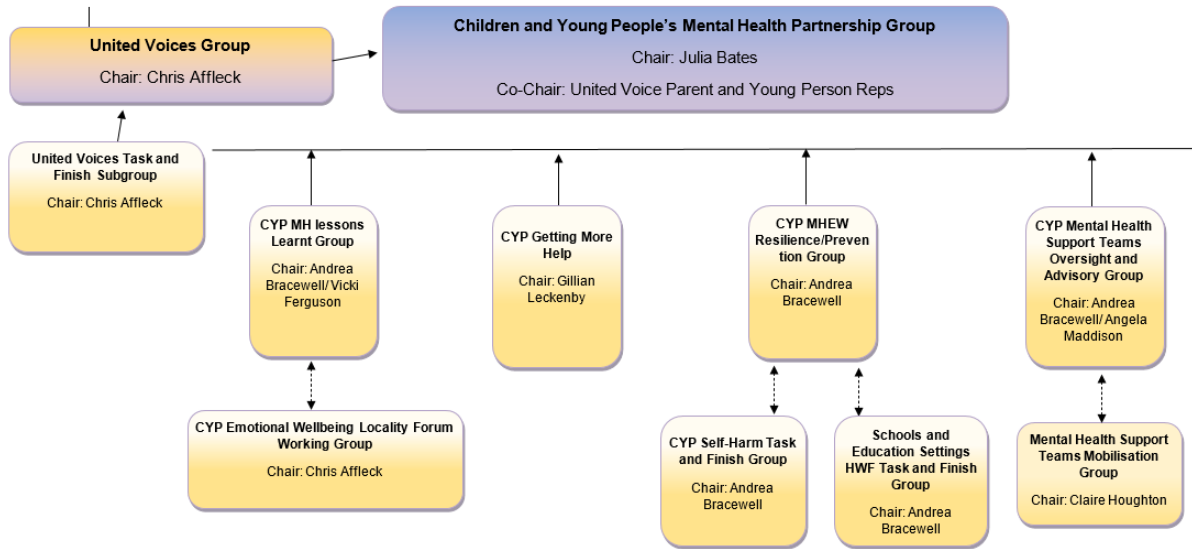
Procurement

Not applicable

Appendix 2: Current County Durham CYP MH Partnership Group Governance



Appendix 3: The Children and Young People’s Mental Health Partnership Governance Chart



Appendix 4: Links to Rainbow Guides

[Mental health & emotional support for children, young people & families in County Durham](#)

[Mental Health & Emotional Support for Adults in County Durham](#)

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Children & Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Children and Young People's Mental Health Update

**Michelle Baldwin – Public Health Strategic Manager
Diane Foster – Public Health Practitioner**



Purpose of the Presentation

To provide an update to Overview and Scrutiny on:

- The national and local context and levels of need;
- A summary of the key national and local strategies relating to Children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- Information on the work of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership relating to the mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience of the children and young people within County Durham.

Background Context

- The challenge in the UK associated with children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing is significant
- The importance of mental health and wellbeing of CYP is becoming increasingly recognised
- The prevalence of mental health conditions in the CYP population is now **1:5** with no indication of reducing. This is a significant increase on the pre-pandemic rate of 1:9.
- High rates of child poverty are likely to be exacerbated by the current cost of living pressures and their impact on families and communities.
- Disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances represent a significant risk within children for developing poor health, including persistent mental health difficulties extending into adulthood and reduced life opportunities.

Level of need – National Picture

The challenge in the UK associated with children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing is significant. The following key headline facts (NHS Digital):

- In 2023, about 1:5 CYP aged 8-25 years had a probable mental disorder.
- Having a probable mental disorder was more common for 11-16 year olds (22.6%) than for those aged 8-10 years (15.7%).
- 5.9% of children aged 8 to 16 years with a probable mental disorder had tried to harm themselves in the past 4 weeks.
- After a rise in prevalence between 2017 and 2020, rates of probable mental disorder remained stable in all age groups between 2022 and 2023.
- Among 8-16 year olds, rates of probable mental disorder were similar for boys and girls, while for 17-25 year olds, rates were twice as high for young women than young men.
- More than 1:4 children aged 8 to 16 years (26.8%) with a probable mental disorder had a parent who could not afford for their child to take part in activities outside school or college.

Level of need – Local Picture

What we know about the population needs of children and young people in County Durham:

- There are 115,000 children aged less than 19 years living in County Durham.
- County Durham is in the top 40% of the most deprived Local Authorities in England and around 1 in 4 (23.6%) children in County Durham live in relative poverty (2021/22) which is over 27,000 CYP.
- 3.6% of school children have additional, social, emotional, and mental health needs which equates to over 2600 children. This has increased from 2.6% in 2015/16
- 14.6% of pupils, around 11,200 children, receive Special Educational Needs support,
- Approximately 3000 CYP have an Education, Health and Care Plan. 20% of these pupils have a primary need relating to social, emotional or mental health need.

National Developments

There are welcome recent developments which have significantly changed the landscape:

- DfE requirement for all schools have a senior mental health lead (SMHL) by 2025
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST's), known locally as Piece of Mind (PoM), is an NHS funded programme of support provided to schools. This is a phased role out of support increasing coverage from 30% to 40% of schools in County Durham
- Family Hubs which are open to all, and the Family Hubs work with families in navigating all aspects of family support.

Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership Vision

Our vision is:

“To support Children and Young People across County Durham to achieve their optimum mental health and emotional wellbeing”



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Safeguarding Adults Board

Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Officer Health and Wellbeing Group
Chair: Jane Robinson

County Durham Partnership
Children & Families Partnership
Safe Durham Partnership
Environment and climate change Partnership
Economic Partnership

Subgroups of Children & Families P'Ship
• Best Start in Life Steering Group
• Early Help Steering Group
• Transitions Steering Group
• Integration Steering Group

Health & Wellbeing Board
Chair : Cllr Chris Hood

Engagement Mechanisms:
County Durham Mental Health Provider & Stakeholder Forum

Voice of lived experience TBC

Mental Health Strategic Partnership Board
Chair: Jo Murray and Jane Sunter

Children and Young People's Mental Health Governance

KEY:
Working relationship ———
Reporting Relationship - - - - -

Subgroups of Children & Young People's Mental Health P'Ship
• Resilience and Prevention Group
• Piece of Mind Oversight Group
• Lessons Learnt Group
• Getting More Help Group
• Children's Mental Health Locality Pilot

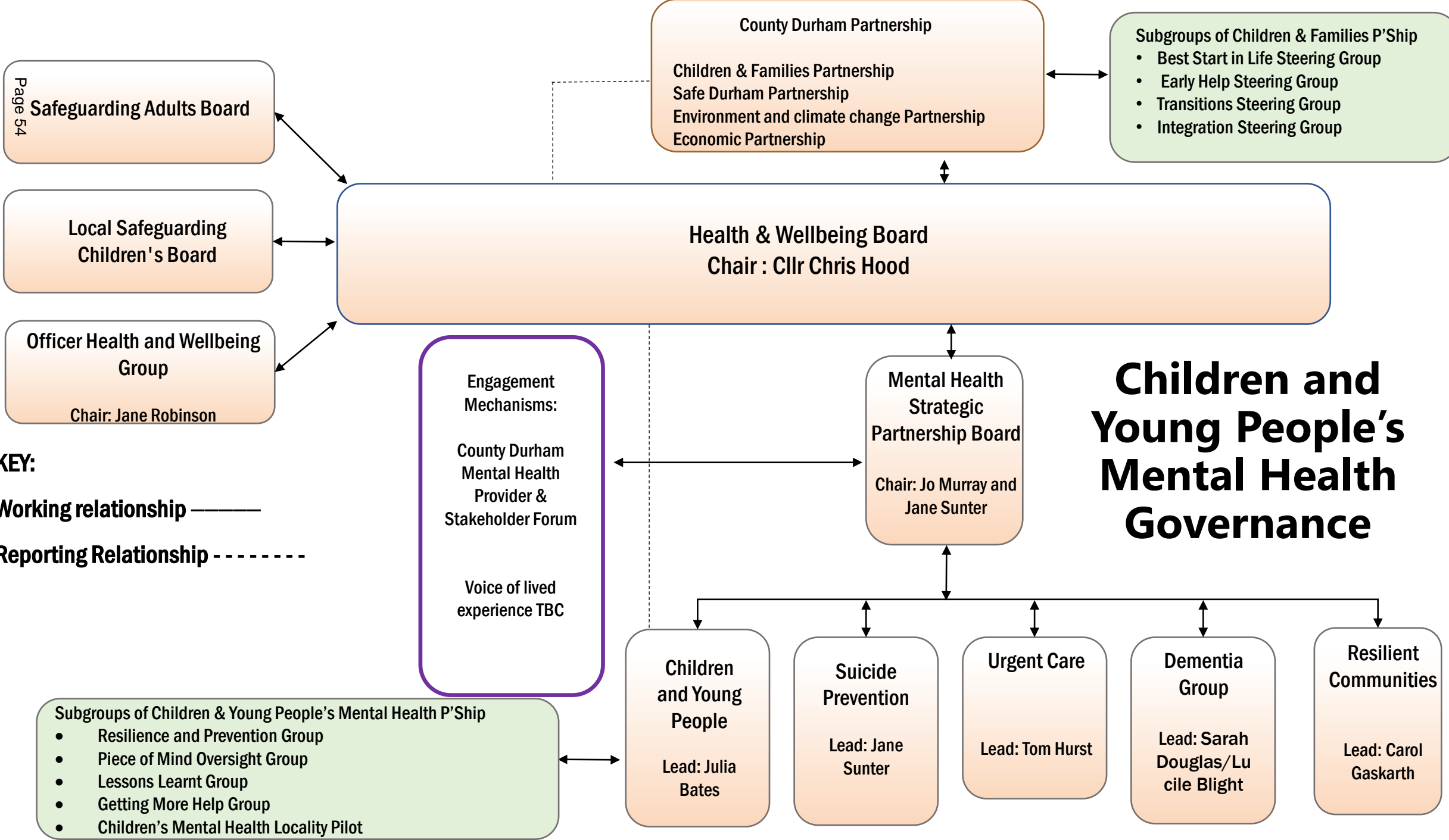
Children and Young People
Lead: Julia Bates

Suicide Prevention
Lead: Jane Sunter

Urgent Care
Lead: Tom Hurst

Dementia Group
Lead: Sarah Douglas/Lucile Blight

Resilient Communities
Lead: Carol Gaskarth



Children and Young People's Mental Health Partnership Aims

- We will be **united in voices** and drive participation and engagement from CYP and families across all aspects of mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Work together to develop **whole communities** (including all sectors, settings and communities) to be **skilled competent and confident** to talk about mental health, understand mental health and emotional wellbeing issues and the support options available.
- Work together to develop a coordinated and comprehensive **mental health and emotional wellbeing offer** to support children, young people and families that is easy to access. Based on the THRIVE model.
- Work together to drive **universal and targeted resilience, prevention and early intervention** across County Durham, starting from early years, through childhood and the transition into adulthood.



Experts by Experience (EBE)

- EBE (a young person and a parent) support the CYP MH Partnership as independent Co-Chairs having input into the planning and delivery of the agenda.
- Their role is to:
 - scrutinise the work of the CYP MH Partnership to ensure the needs of County Durham CYP are being met;
 - bring your own knowledge and experience of CYP mental health;
 - ensure there is effective challenge to the CYP MH Partnership and that this challenge is constructive to support CYP and aligns with the vision of the CYP Partnership;
 - act as a non-party-political voice for children and young people who reside within County Durham.
- Plans are place to recruit an EBE to attend each of the subgroups on a regular basis and these EBE will feedback area priority areas to the EBE Co-Chairs.
- The voice of lived experience is part of the outcome measures for each of the programmes.

THRIVE Framework

The Thrive framework is a person centred and needs led approach to ensure that children, young people, and families receive the right support at the right time. The framework categories mental health and emotional wellbeing into five groups.

Thriving: This category refers to CYP who are doing well but may need some effective prevention and resilience-based strategies to support with the ups and downs in life.

Getting Advice: This category includes CYP who need advice and direction.

Getting Help: This category includes children and young people who need specific time limited help for mental wellbeing, emotional wellbeing or social wellbeing. It involves professionals taking direct responsibility to assist individuals or groups.

Getting More Help: Similar to Getting Help. It is a needs-based intensive support offer for CYP requiring more support.

Getting Risk Support: This category refers to those who have not benefitted from or are unable to use help but are of such a risk that they are still in contact with services.



Ref: [Implementingtrive.org](https://implementingtrive.org). THRIVE-Framework-for-system-change-2019.pdf

Early Help – Family Hubs

Family Hubs support families, during pregnancy, through their child's early years and into school. They offer a range of activities, groups and programmes for parents and carers to attend as well as for children and young people.

A range of these activities and programmes are designed to:-

Examples include:

- saying safe and healthy
- family relationships
- support for dads to be
- courses and groups for families of children with special educational needs and disabilities
- toddler and me / and baby and me
- infant feeding support
- emotional wellbeing support for CYP & families

- Support families to understand their child/teenager's behaviour
- Support families with their child's wellbeing
- Support families with their child's additional needs
- Support families and their child's health

Support for Education Settings



- Emotional Wellbeing Forums
- Health and Wellbeing Framework
- Anxious about School
- Durham Resilience Programme
- Youth Mental Health Aware/ Nurturing Our Wellbeing
- Senior Mental Health Leads Training
- Emotional Health & Resilience Team
- Piece of Mind Team (40% of schools can access)

Emotional Health & Resilience Team

- Dedicated skill mixed team within the Family Health Service / school nurse team
- Provide a universal support offer to all schools
- Focus on improving resilience and early help and support (thriving and getting advice)
- Support for CYP while waiting for more help / onward referral
- One to one and group drop in sessions

Rainbow Guides



Mental Health & Emotional Support

for children, young people & families in County Durham

This is a **great starting point** to help you **access support**

Local Support

KOOTH | www.kooth.com
Free, safe and anonymous support around mental wellbeing for 11 years +

Family Hubs | 03000 261 111 | www.durham.gov.uk/helpforfamilies
Advice and practical support across all aspects of family life

Emotional Health & Resilience Team | 03000 263 532
Emotional health, advice and guidance for 5 – 19 years

Education & SEND Support | www.countydurhamfamilies.info
Support for children with special educational needs or disabilities

Investing in Children | 0191 3077030 | www.investinginchildren.net
A children's right organisation, creating spaces to be heard

Humankind | 01325 731 160 | www.humankindcharity.org.uk
Health and wellbeing support LGBTQ young people aged 15-24 years

DurhamWorks | 03000 262 930 | www.durhamworks.info
Supporting 16-24 year olds not in education, employment or training

Recovery College Online | www.recoverycollegeonline.co.uk
Educational courses and resources to support mental health and wellbeing

Children's Social Care First Contact | 03000 267 979
www.durham.gov.uk/FirstContact
Report a concern about a child's welfare

CAMHS - Single Point of Access | 03001 239 296 | www.teww.nhs.uk
Community mental health teams for children (0 – 18 years)

TEWV Crisis line | 0800 0516 171 | www.teww.nhs.uk
24-hour service for young people experiencing a mental health crisis



National Support

Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families | www.annafreud.org
Self-care to look after our own mental health

Charlie Waller Memorial Trust | www.cwmt.org.uk
Resources for schools and families

Childline | 0800 1111 | www.childline.org.uk
Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem

Headspace | www.headspace.com
Free tools around mindfulness and meditation

NHS Better Health Every Mind Matters
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters
Resources to support children and young people's mental health

MindEd | www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk
Safe and reliable advice about young people's mental health

Young Minds | 0808 802 5544 | www.youngminds.org.uk
Helping young people around isolation and gaining support around mental health

The Mix | 0808 808 4994 | www.themix.org.uk
Free, confidential support for under 25 via online, social or mobile

BEAT Youthline | 0808 801 0711 | www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk
Provides support for children and young people with an eating disorder

NHS 111 | www.nhs.uk
Get medical help near you or advice on your nearest walk-in centres

Remember your **local school** and **GPs** are **available to help**.
You are not alone, we can get through this **together**.

 **County Durham**
Clinical Commissioning Group

 **Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys**
NHS Foundation Trust

 **Durham**
County Council

 **County Durham**
Care Partnership

V4 December 23
35885 C195

Examples of Recent Work

- Recruitment of a parent carer and young person as Experts by Experience, independent Co-Chairs for the CYP Mental Health Partnership.
- Roll out of a fourth Mental Health Support Team to cover additional schools in Bishop Auckland and Chester-Le-Street areas.
- Complete a Health Needs Assessment for Children and Young Peoples Mental Health.
- Completed Health Equity Audit identifying the mental health support accessed by schools across the County meaning we can support schools to engage where this is indicated.
- Successful event promoting of the Durham Mental Health Offer for schools.
- Increased school and support services sign up to the Emotional Wellbeing Forums
- Delivery of a Health and Wellbeing Framework and Durham Resilience Programme Learning Event
- The development of the Anxious about Schools Guidance for all schools
- The development of critical incident guidance and a standard operating procedure to ensure a co-ordinated approach for schools.
- CYP delivered a staff awareness session on World Mental Health Day
- Continued partnership working across the system including the Consett Locality Pilot and Family Hubs

Conclusion and Next Steps

- From analyses of hospital admissions data, it is clear that while admissions for mental health conditions and self-harm in younger people in 2021/22 may be relatively high in County Durham compared to the England average, at least part of that difference relates to how care is recorded at University Hospital of North Durham. The introduction of Observation Beds, whilst clinically being the right action to take in terms of the optimal patient care pathway, had an unintended consequence of increasing headline admission numbers and rates. Rates are now reducing and are approaching pre-pandemic levels
- The CYP Mental Health Partnership will continue to promote awareness of the support available for children, young people, and families across the system with a key focus on supporting young people to continue to thrive and become resilient, with prevention and early interventions.
- Continue to promote awareness of the support available within schools and the wider community to support children, young people, and families with mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Continually listen to our CYP to understand their needs and review our service offer to ensure that CYP and families receive person centred and needs led support with the right support at the right time.
- The support available to schools is currently under review with a focus on ensuring that there is equity across all schools in County Durham and that services provide interventions that link to the Thriving, Getting Advice and Getting Help categories of the Thrive framework.

Any Questions?

**Children and Young People’s Overview
and Scrutiny**

26 April 2024



**Children and Young People’s Services –
Quarter 3: Forecast of Revenue and
Capital Outturn 2023/24**

**Joint Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources and
John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s
Services**

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 December 2023.

Executive summary

- 2 The 2023/24 projected outturn for CYPS, based upon the position to 31 December 2023 is a cash limit overspend of £8.102 million, representing a 4.7% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS. The quarter two forecast was a £6.222 million cash limit overspend to the year end.
- 3 The cash limit outturn projection excludes the forecast use of / contributions to earmarked reserves and items outside the cash limit such as redundancy costs which are met from corporate reserves.
- 4 Forecast reductions in energy costs of £0.185 million, inflationary increases re Fostering Allowances of £0.590 million and the 2023/24 award in relation to vacancies totalling £0.283 million which have been excluded from the cash limit outturn position.
- 5 Also excluded is £0.160 million forecasted expenditure on surplus schools, £0.200 million in relation to Educational Psychologists locum support costs to support meeting statutory assessment timeframes, and £0.112 million relating to backdated allowances at Aycliffe Secure Centre which have all been funded corporately.
- 6 The forecast outturn position factors in forecast overspends within Head of Social Care of £9.414 million and underspends within Education and

Skills of £0.391 million, CYPS Central of £0.672 million and Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.247 million.

- 7 Details of the reasons for under and overspending against relevant budget heads are disclosed in the report.
- 8 The service capital budget 2023/24 is £59.193 million with expenditure of £29.822 million as at the end December 2023.

Recommendation(s)

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

Background

- 10 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.
- 11 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2023/24 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 31 December 2023 is a cash limit overspend of £8.102 million, representing a 4.7% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS. The quarter two forecast was a £6.222 million cash limit overspend to the year end.

- 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 £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Variance £m	Pay award/ Pension deficit £m	Inflation / Contingencies £m	Cash Limit Variance £m
Social Care	103.815	113.572	9.757	0.205	-0.548	9.414
EHIVC	6.322	6.196	-0.126	0.069	-0.19	-0.247
Education & Skills	41.536	41.116	-0.420	0.009	0.021	-0.391
Operational Supp	2.505	2.505	0	0	0	0
Central Charges	17.304	16.677	-0.627	-0.045	0	-0.672
HoSC Excluded	0.049	0.049	0	0	0	0
Total	171.531	180.115	8.584	0.238	-0.717	8.102

- 14 The forecast outturn position factors in forecast overspends within Head of Social Care of £9.414 million and underspends within Education and Skills of £0.391 million, CYPS Central of £0.672 million and Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.247 million.

- 15 Further details of the main variances are provided below:

- (a) Childrens Social Care is forecast to be a net £9.414 million over budget for the year. The service is forecasting a net overspend of £9.050 million relating to the cost of placements for children looked after (CLA), net of costs relating to higher rates for fostering allowances that will be met corporately. This compares to the previous forecast of a net overspend of £7.143 million on placement costs in-year.
- (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 £62.952 million, an increase of £15.896 million on the previous year.
- (c) The total number of CLA increased by 32 between August 2023 and December 2023, from 1,152 to 1,184. The number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) increased by 5, from 78 to 83, across the same period.

- (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.
- (e) The number of CLA in external high-cost placements (defined as those costing more than £100,000 per annum) has increased by 4 (or 5%) in the period between August 2023 to December 2023.
- (f) Over the same period, the number of children within in-house children's homes reduced from 28 to 25. This is primarily due to the planned movement of young people to transition into 16-plus accommodation allowing the service to care plan across several homes and effectively match younger children, who are of a similar age into each in house vacancy. The reduction in in-house occupancy will provide capacity to assist in managing any increase in the number of young people requiring external residential provision in the future.
- (g) The quarter three forecast assumes the number of high-cost external placements remains at the current level (both number and average cost) for the remainder of the financial year, or that any increase in numbers is offset by a reduction in average cost as was the case over the previous quarters.
- (h) Costs for placements requiring intensive support and / or crisis intervention (including unregistered placements) has been estimated using an average of 8 placements at an average cost of £0.686 million per placement per annum.
- (i) The increase in the forecast overspend position is largely the result of the increase in volume of CLA, the majority of whom are placed in lower-cost placements.
- (j) The Head of Education is reporting an underspend of £0.391 million to the year end after taking account of adjustments of £30,000 for inflationary pressures and estimated pay awards. The main reasons are highlighted below:
 - (i) A forecast £0.459 million loss of income from schools due to conversions to academy status during the year and those schools ceasing Service Level Agreements with the council.
 - (ii) A forecast overspend of £0.219 million relating to the write off of aged pupil transfer debts relating to financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20. These debts were not pursued during the COVID pandemic when all debt collection management was paused and, following various discussions with the schools and/or Multi Academy Trusts

- concerned, it has been agreed to write-off the charges. This overspend is offset by a reduction in the bad debt provision, which is reported under the Central CYPS budget heading.
- (iii) A forecast overspend of £0.117 million relating to DCC-run Nursery provision.
- (iv) A forecast overspend of £83,000 million relating to the operation of Durham Leadership Centre due to a shortfall in lettings income.
- (v) These overspends are offset by the following underspends:
- £0.453 million on Early Years activity budgets
 - £0.190 million Pension Liabilities savings
 - £0.160 million saving on DCC contribution towards the Maintained Nursery Schools
 - £0.138 million against staffing budgets, largely as a result of a restructure in Education Durham effective from September 2023.
- (vi) There is forecast underspend of £0.237 million on the Home to School Transport (HTST) budget. The HTST budget was increased by £9.6 million this year and now stands at £29.1 million.
- (vii) The HTST forecast is based on contract data as at 11 December 2023 and therefore reflects the latest information following a significant tendering and procurement exercise over the summer for transport starting in September 2023.
- (viii) There is no anticipated cash limit impact for the Progression and Learning service after the net use of £3.467 million of reserves.
- (ix) A significant part of the service is funded by EU (ESF) grants ended on 31 December 2023. There will be ongoing costs beyond this point and whilst it is uncertain at this stage how significant this will be, a prudent forecast of those staff continuing in post beyond 31 December 2023 has been made and an assumption included that P&L reserves will meet this cost. An estimate of £0.200 million has also been forecast for associated redundancies, however these costs will be funded by the corporate ER/VR reserve.

- (k) There is a forecast underspend of £0.672 million against Central CYPS budgets, largely as the result of a forecast reduction in the bad debt provision for the year.
 - (l) The Head of Early Help and Inclusion budget forecasts are showing an underspend of £0.247 million to year end, with the main reasons being as follows:
 - (i) Aycliffe Secure Centre is reporting a contribution to reserves of £70,000, after accounting for an estimate of £0.112 million relating to backdated payments for Community Homes Additional Allowance that is to be funded from contingencies. This is an improved position from quarter two when a cash limit overspend of £0.306 million was forecast.
 - (ii) Educational Psychology locum support costs of £0.200 million has been included in the forecast with funding to be provided via corporate contingencies agreed in 2023/24 to complete statutory assessments.
 - (iii) The One Point Service is forecasting an underspend of £0.321 million, which is mainly attributable to underspends in employee and activity budgets.
 - (iv) The remaining service areas in EHIVC are reporting an overspend of £73,000.
 - (m) It is forecast that expenditure will be in line with budget for the Operational Support area of the service.
- 16 The forecast cash limit outturn shows the position after a net £10.330 million movement to and from reserves, the major items being:
- (a) £3.821 million drawdown from the Schools Reserves to write off School deficits as part of the academy transfer process;
 - (b) £3.331 million drawdown from Progression and Learning Reserves to fund the impact of ESF grant funding reductions from January impacting on quarter four, with new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant allocations not being receivable until April 2024;
 - (c) £0.889 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;

- (d) £0.613 million drawdown from the Homes for Ukraine reserve to be utilised by 31 March 2024;
 - (e) £0.359 million drawdown from the Family Hubs Programme reserve to fund service delivery;
 - (f) £0.318 million drawdown from the Children's Social Inclusion reserve to fund the Holiday Activities and Food Programme;
 - (g) £0.285 million drawdown from the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children reserve to fund service delivery;
 - (h) £0.275 million drawdown from the Emotional Wellbeing reserve to fund service developments;
 - (i) £0.259 million drawdown from the Music Service reserve to fund service delivery;
 - (j) £0.247 million drawdown from the Rapid Response reserve to fund the service; £3.410 million drawdown from Schools Reserves to write off School deficits as part of the academy transfer process.
- 17 The following budget transfer has been actioned in the third quarter:
- (a) £2.924 million from general contingencies in relation to the 2023/24 Pay award that was agreed in November 2023.
- 18 Taking the forecast outturn position into account, there is a £8.102 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

- 19 The council currently maintains 152 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 The council had 161 maintained schools at the time of budget setting, however seven schools have since converted to academy status. There are now 114 academy schools in County Durham.
- 21 The table below shows the schools that have transferred to academy status since 1 April 2023 and the balances that transferred in year. In the case of Wellfield School, the council agreed to write-off the deficit using the earmarked reserve established for this purpose to facilitate the transfer:

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
Green Lane C of E Primary	0.070
Greenfield School	0.710
St Helen Auckland Primary	0.113
Durham Sixth Form Centre	5.118
Awaiting Transfer	0.179
Net change due to academisation	4.033

22 The recast reserve position for the remaining 152 maintained schools at quarter two is shown in the following table:

Subjective Budget Heading	Original Budget	Quarter 3 Forecast	Forecast to Budget Variance
	£ million	£ million	£ million
Employees	199.712	201.285	1.573
Premises	15.017	15.726	0.709
Transport	1.805	2.309	0.504
Supplies	34.013	35.415	1.402
Central Support & DRF	0.000	0.224	0.224
Gross expenditure	250.547	254.959	4.412
Income	-60.963	-70.345	-9.382
Net expenditure	189.584	184.614	-4.970
Budget share	-181.576	-182.328	-0.752
Use of reserves	8.008	2.286	-5.722
Balance at 31 March	24.429	24.429	0.000
Balance at 31 March	16.421	22.143	-5.722

23 In overall terms, the quarter three forecast reflects an improved position from the original budget where these schools were forecasting to require a net £8.008 million of reserves to balance the in-year financial position. The updated position at quarter three is that the use of reserves figure will be a net £2.286 million, a reduction of £5.722 million against the original budget plans. At quarter two the forecasts indicated

a net use of reserves of £2.158 million, a reduction of £4.753 million against the original budget plans.

- 24 Within the updated net position there are 84 schools drawing a forecast £5.729 million from their retained reserves in year (to offset in-year overspending) and 68 schools forecasting a £3.443 million addition to their reserves (reflecting in-year underspending).
- 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 In October 2023, the DfE announced additional funding to support individual schools that find themselves in financial difficulties. An overall sum of £20 million was allocated nationally and Durham's share is £0.582 million. Local authorities have significant flexibility about how to use this funding, although it should be allocated in the current financial year.
- 27 Work is currently ongoing between Finance, Education and individual schools to determine how to allocate the funding. The overriding principle in distributing the funding is to ensure that it will support schools at risk of deficit move to a more financially sustainable position.
- 28 The council will work closely with schools over the spring term to support the financial planning process to set balanced budgets for 2024/25.

Dedicated Schools Grant Centrally Retained Block

- 29 The forecast outturn position for the centrally retained DSG budgets shows a projected overspend of £1.940 million, as detailed below:

DSG Block	Budget £ Million	Outturn £ Million	Over / (Under) Spend £ Million
High Needs	85.892	88.283	2.391
Early Years	34.271	33.820	-0.451
Central Schools Services	2.898	2.898	0.000
TOTAL	123.061	125.001	1.940

- 30 The High Needs Block (HNB) budget at the start of the year included a planning assumption of a £1 million underspend that would have resulted in a reduction to the cumulative HNB deficit position.

- 31 The updated position at quarter three is that this expenditure will exceed grant allocation by £2.391 million, an increase from the forecast overspend reported at quarter two and increasing the forecast cumulative deficit from £8.635 million to £11.026 million instead of reducing it.
- 32 The main area of pressure relates to top up funding in mainstream schools and settings, where demand for both EHCP and SEN support top up funding has increased significantly at the start of the academic year.
- 33 Expenditure on mainstream top up funding is forecast to be £19.818 million against a budget of £16.739 million, resulting in a forecast overspend of £3.079 million (18%) against this element of the High Needs DSG budget.
- 34 The figures include £0.830 million to fund increases to top up funding rates that took effect from September 2023. These increases cover top up funding in mainstream settings from 0-16 and were required to meet the increasing cost of providing support to pupils, largely as a result of recent pay awards. The cost of this will be funded from the budget allocation for Investment Support Fund (ISF), reducing the net overspend to £2.249 million.
- 35 The net overspend of £2.249 million is largely demand driven, with a circa 37% more full time equivalent pupils forecast to require top up funding in 2023/24 in comparison to the previous year. Whilst the average cost of individual top up funding allocations is lower in 2023-24, this still results in a significant overspend position based on the increase in pupils attracting these payments.
- 36 The other main areas of pressure are in Independent and Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) provision, where forecast expenditure of £8.225 million is forecast to exceed budget of £7.214 million by £1.011 million, and in Alternative Provision (AP) where forecast net expenditure is £11.100 million against a net budget of £10.354 million, resulting in an overspend of £0.746 million. Much of this is due to increased numbers of excluded pupils moving the Pupil Referral Unit at The Woodlands school during the autumn term.
- 37 The overspends in mainstream top up funding and INMSS provision are partially offset by the planned underspend of £1 million relating to the deficit reduction that was factored into the original budget proposals.
- 38 The updated HNB Sustainability Plan reported to Cabinet in December 2023 highlighted the implications of lower increases to the HNB grant over the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 when compared to the increases in recent years, set against continuing increases in cost and demand,

resulting in an increasing cumulative deficit position that is forecast to reach £67 million by the end of 2027/28.

- 39 The significant and increasing HNB deficit position is a serious concern for the Council and many other local authorities. The exceptional accounting override that allows councils to exclude HNB deficits from their main council general revenue funding position is due to end in 2025/26, at which point the HNB deficit may need to be funded by council resources.
- 40 Phase one of the HNB Sustainability Programme came to an end of the summer of 2023, which focussed on 9 key areas as agreed by Cabinet in 2019 and reported in previous reports and a review of the progress has taken place and is detailed in the report.
- 41 Phase two of the HNB Sustainability Programme commenced in September 2023, with a major part of it being implementation of the DfE supported Delivering Better Value in SEND work along with further work on Social, Emotional Mental Health and Early Years Funding. The main area of pressure is top up funding in mainstream schools and settings, where demand for both EHCP and SEN support top up funding has increased significantly at the start of the academic year.
- 42 The Early Years Block is forecasting an underspend of £0.451 million. This is largely due to a reduction in the numbers of children forecasted to be eligible for funding, based on the actuals we have experienced in the Autumn Term.
- 43 Forecasts for the Spring term assumes similar levels of uptake as experienced in 2022/23, and if this were to be the position it is likely that this will result in an adjustment to funding in the 2024/25 financial year when the pupil numbers used for funding purposes are updated.
- 44 The impact of the current forecast on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table:

DSG Reserves	High Needs Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million	Early Years Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million	Schools Block (Unusable Reserve) £ Million	Total DSG (Unusable Reserve) £ Million
Balance at 1 April 2022	-8.843	0.656	2.401	-5.786
2021/22 Early Years Block Adj	0	0.594	0	0.594
Use/ Contribution in 2022/23	0.208	-0.528	-1.620	-1.940
Balance at 1 31 March 2023	-8.835	0.722	0.781	-7.132
2022/23 Early Years Block Adj	0	-0.359	0	-0.359
Forecast Use / Contribution	-2.391	0.451	0	-1.940
Forecast Balance at 1 April 2024	-11.026	0.814	0.781	-9.431

45 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 £9.431 million to the year end (prior to any clawback of EY funding). At quarter two the overall deficit position was forecast to be £9.158 million to the year end.

Capital Programme

46 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.

47 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)

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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

Budget Heading	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	OCL	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	97.507	95.459	-2.048	0.126	-1.922
Premises	5.479	5.946	0.468	0.185	0.652
Transport	36.742	36.308	-0.434	0	-0.434
Supplies and Services	12.170	20.985	8.815	0	8.815
Third Party Payments	64.631	75.293	10.662	-0.590	10.072
Transfer Payments	3.728	4.431	0.703	0	0.703
Capital	13.962	13.962	0	0	0
Central Support	28.764	21.079	-7.685	-0.200	-7.885
DRF	0	0.005	0.005	0	0.005
Expenditure sub-total	262.983	273.468	10.486	-0.479	10.006
Grant	-32.568	-34.567	-1.999	0	-1.999
Contributions Summary	-4.668	-4.660	0.008	0	0.008
Sales Summary	-0.053	-0.035	0.018	0	0.018
Charges	-18.877	-19.508	-0.630	0	-0.630
Rents	-0.314	-0.448	-0.133	0	-0.133
Recharges	-34.948	-33.776	1.172	0	1.172
Other Income Summary	-0.023	-0.362	-0.339	0	-0.339
Income sub-total	-91.451	-93.356	-1.903	0	-1.903
Total	171.532	180.112	8.583	-0.479	8.102

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

Head of Service	Actual to 31 December 2023	Budget 2023/24	Budget Future Years
	£	£	£
Childrens Services-Childrens Care	1,592,828	1,971,126	3,983,723
Early Help Inclusion & Vulnerable Children-Inc SEN Capital	171,097	1,282,839	12,894,858
Education-School Devolved Capital	3,323,385	3,837,062	2,960,549
Education-School Related	24,133,490	51,011,210	62,959,534
Childrens Services-Secure Services	228,086	502,544	0
Childrens Services - Planning & Service Strategy	372,973	587,955	77,220
Total	29,821,859	59,192,736	82,875,884

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

26 April 2024

Quarter Three, 2023/24 Performance Management Report



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

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 three, 2023/24, October to December 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 effectively deliver its services and its contribution to achieving this vision in our [Council Plan](#). The Council Plan 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 The [Council Plan](#) is undergoing its annual refresh and the plan for 2024-28 will be considered by Council on 28 February 2024. Subject to Council approval, it will continue to be structured around five thematic areas which, along with the objectives they contain, will remain unchanged. Our priorities, key programmes of work and associated performance management arrangements for the forthcoming four years are set out within the refreshed plan and our performance framework is now being adjusted accordingly. The

new framework will form the structure of this performance report from quarter one, 2024/25.

- 6 We are a well-functioning council in relation to performance and continue to set our performance against characteristics of well-functioning councils as set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)¹ Best Value Standards and Intervention Draft Guidance. 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.
- 7 In July 2023, the Office for Local Government (Oflog) was established as a new performance body for local government. Its purpose is to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and support its improvement.
- 8 Oflog's initial focus is to bring together existing data in an informative way through the [Local Authority Data Explorer](#). The first tranche of metrics, uploaded to the Data Explorer in July 2023 and incorporated within this performance report, is being expanded to cover a wider range of local government responsibilities. A second tranche of metrics is now being released and a third tranche will follow in the spring of 2024. These metrics will be incorporated into future reports as and when appropriate.

Context

- 9 The council is a large organisation providing a broad range of services, and our operating environment can at times be challenging, due largely to inflationary and demand pressures.
 - (a) We are showing strong economic performance in the county with a range of measures such as the employment rate and unemployment being favourable compared to previous years. Cultural events are well attended with local businesses enjoying their economic impact. A current challenge for the council is transitioning from European funding to national schemes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for employment initiatives.
 - (b) Key measures around waste collection and disposal show that we are diverting a smaller proportion of waste to landfill, and contamination of

¹ [Best Value standards and intervention](#)

our household recycling continues to come down. Carbon emissions from council operations is falling but we need to accelerate our programme if we are to meet our targets. Bus patronage for our park and ride scheme and for public bus services has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Work is going on at national, regional, and local levels to help mitigate against these losses.

- (c) Demand for children's social care remains high. Processing times and re-referral rates demonstrate the effectiveness of social care provision. Care Acts assessment timeliness for adult social care clients is improving and remains an area of strong focus for us. We have experienced a substantial increase in requests for education, health, and care plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities since 2019 leading to backlogs for educational psychologist advice. No applications have been processed within the government's 20-week timescale. This remains a concern. The proportion of people accessing homeless services where we have accepted the statutory duty of homelessness has increased.
- (d) The overall crime rate in County Durham has fallen and compares favourably with many council areas in the region. However, there has been a steady increase in referrals of domestic abuse to our support services. Fly-tipping reports to the council remain at an all-time low due to the proactive approach. The number of eligible private sector rented properties which are fully licensed under the selective licensing scheme is now at 43%. Timeliness of repairing all categories of highway defects are better than target. Fatalities from road traffic accidents is worse than comparators. Retail vacancies are higher than national levels although there is a varied picture across our centres.
- (e) The employee sickness absence rate is falling and is now at 11.15 days per full-time equivalent. The council continues to experience recruitment difficulties in certain occupational categories with some positions being advertised multiple times.

Recommendation

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

- (a) note the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter three performance, and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.

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://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s168768/Council%20Plan%20Refresh%20Appendix%203.pdf>
- Quarter Two, 2023/24 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s183015/Q2%202023-24%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report.pdf>
- Quarter One, 2023/24 Performance Management Report
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s178933/Q1%202023-24%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20-%20Cabinet%2013.09.23.pdf>
- 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/s171720/Item%205%20Corporate%20Performance%20Report%20Q3%202022-23.pdf>

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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 the Safe Durham Partnership and its sub-groups.

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 Three, 2023/24



Contents (blue text links to sections of the report)

Our Economy		➤ Executive Summary – Our People
	Performance Dashboards	➤ Educational attainment
Our People		➤ Our People Performance Report
	Performance Dashboards	➤ Early help and referrals
		➤ Assessments, protection plans, in need, social worker vacancies
		➤ Children in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children
		➤ Education
	➤ SEND	
	➤ Data Tables	

Executive Summary

- 1 This performance report covers the third quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (October to December 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.

Our people

- 3 This 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 invest in a multi-million-pound programme to transform our leisure centre venues.

Going Well

- 4 Demand for early help and statutory support for children and families remains consistent with previous trends. Improved practice has led to a consistently low re-referral rate for statutory children's social care. This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.

Issues we are addressing

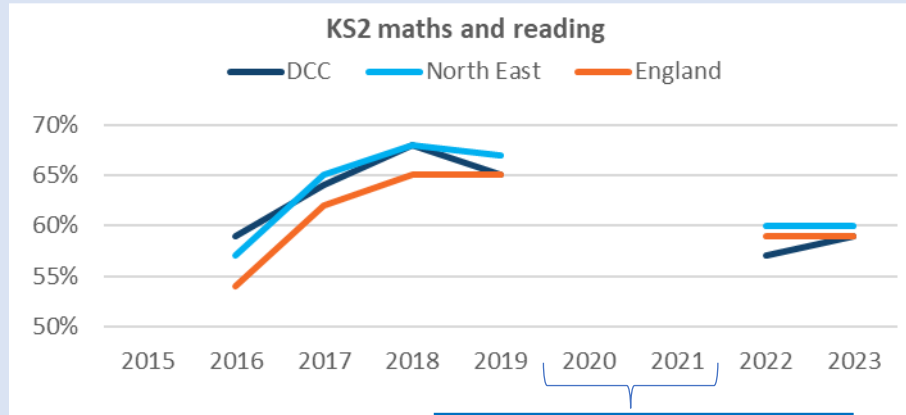
- 5 Although overall statutory demand for children's social care remains consistent, the number of children and young people receiving intensive support (on a Child Protection Plan and taken into our care) is relatively high. The service is reviewing these trends and learning will feed into strategic placement sufficiency work and preparation for the implementation of the Care Review proposals.
- 6 Requests for new Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) increased substantially between 2019 and 2022 and have continued at a very high level in 2023, which is impacting on capacity in the service to achieve timely assessments. A comprehensive action plan is in place which seeks to address these challenges and improve timeliness rates, particularly in relation to the backlog for educational psychologist advice, this will continue to cause a timeliness issue until the backlog of requests has been cleared.

Risk Management

- 7 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 [Strategic Risk Management Progress Report](#) provides an insight into the work carried out by the Corporate Risk Management Group between June and September 2023.

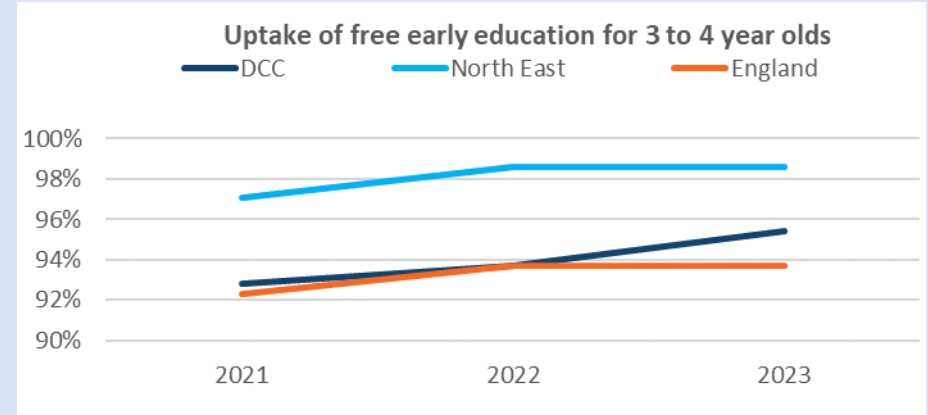
Education Dashboard

(Annual data - provisional)



2020 and 2021 assessments
Suspended due to Covid-19

- The proportion of Key Stage 2 children (11-year-olds) achieving 'expected' standards in Maths and Reading at KS2 improved from 57% in 2022 to 59% in 2023 eliminating the gap with England. The proportion of Key Stage 2 children (11-year-olds) achieving 'expected' standards in Maths and Reading at Key Stage 2 improved from 57% in 2022 to 59% in 2023 eliminating the gap with England.



- In 2023 95.4% of three- to four-year-olds were benefiting from free early education, improving uptake since 2021 (93%).
- This latest data is better than the England average (94%) but worse than the NE average (98%).

Education

- 8 More children are benefiting from free early childcare in Durham with more than 95% of three- to four-year-olds taking it up, increasing from 93% in 2021.
- 9 All parents and carers of three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours a week childcare support with registered childcare providers. Eligible working parents and carers of children aged three-four can also get an additional 15 hours' childcare support, bringing their total up to 30 hours a week. Starting from April 2024, existing childcare support will be expanded in phases. By September 2025, most working families with children under the age of five will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support.
- 10 Key Stage 2 outcomes improved in 2023 eliminating the gap with England but remain lower than pre-pandemic results, a trend that is reflected regionally and nationally. Children young people service support local attainment outcomes through their ongoing Education Review which aims to deliver a sustainable school system in County Durham including addressing the current financial and projected budgetary position, sufficiency of school places, quality and stability of leadership, current condition of buildings and accessibility and suitability of schools and settings to provide outstanding learning. The Education Review has the following objectives:
 - **Economy:** Ensuring Children and young people have the best possible outcomes.
 - **Environment:** Maintaining and strengthening schools' capacity to meet community needs.
 - **People:** Ensuring that all children access a good or better education and every child having the option of attending a local school.
 - **Communities:** Exploring new education partnerships which maintain high quality provision in every locality.
 - **Council:** Develop, evolve, and integrate a service delivery model to secure future opportunities.

Our People

Priority Aims:

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

Children's Social Care

- 11 In November 2023, Ofsted carried out a focused visit looking at our arrangements for care-experienced young people - specifically the quality of preparation for adulthood, the quality and suitability of accommodation and care leavers with specific needs. [Feedback](#) was positive and identified that "leaders have a detailed understanding of the strengths of this area of service and where further improvements can be made. Senior leaders have further developed and improved services for care-experienced young people".
- 12 In December 2023 new statutory guidance was released on the principles behind children's social care. A new [Children's Social Care National Framework](#) brings together the purpose, principles, enablers, and outcomes that should be achieved in children's social care, and linked to this new framework are plans for a new [children's social care dashboard](#).
- 13 Updated statutory guidance, [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#), sets out new child protection standards and advocates for a multi-disciplinary workforce to support the diverse needs of children and families when safeguarding children. A [data strategy](#) outlines plans to transform children's social care data, including improved information sharing through research and evaluation and a children's social care dashboard to consolidate data in one place.
- 14 An advice document, [Improving practice with children, young people and families](#), offers support and guidance to key partners in implementing and embedding the Children's Social Care National Framework and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. Together this framework and guidance clarifies existing statutory

duties, sets national direction for practice, and sets the expectations for multi-agency working across the whole system of help, support and protection for children and their families.

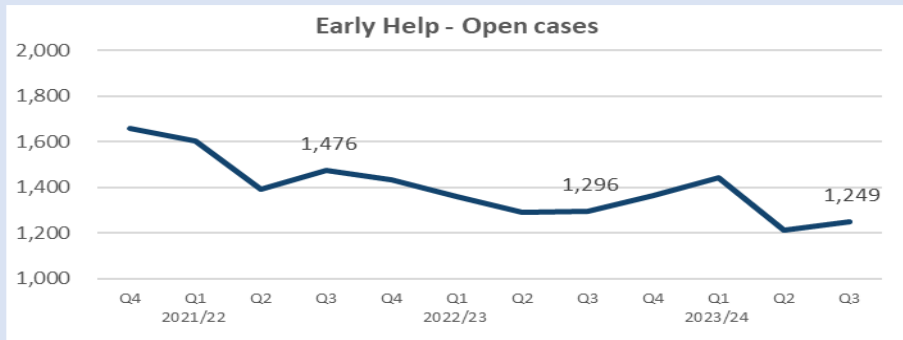
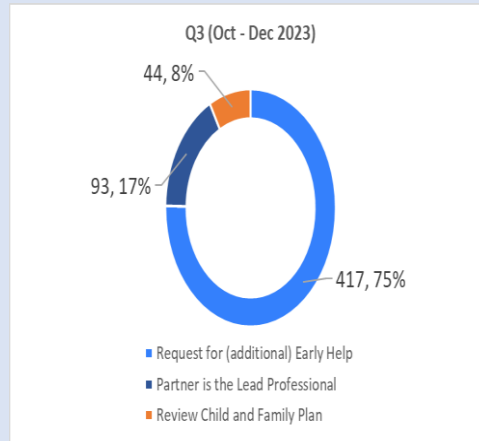
- 15 The service is reviewing the detail and implications of this new framework and will embed in practice, strategic policy development and local improvement priorities.

Children's Social Care Dashboard: Early Help and Referrals

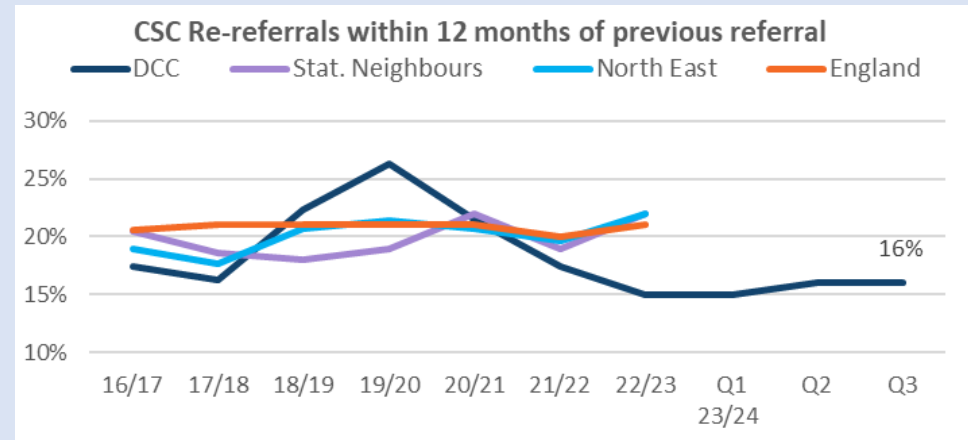
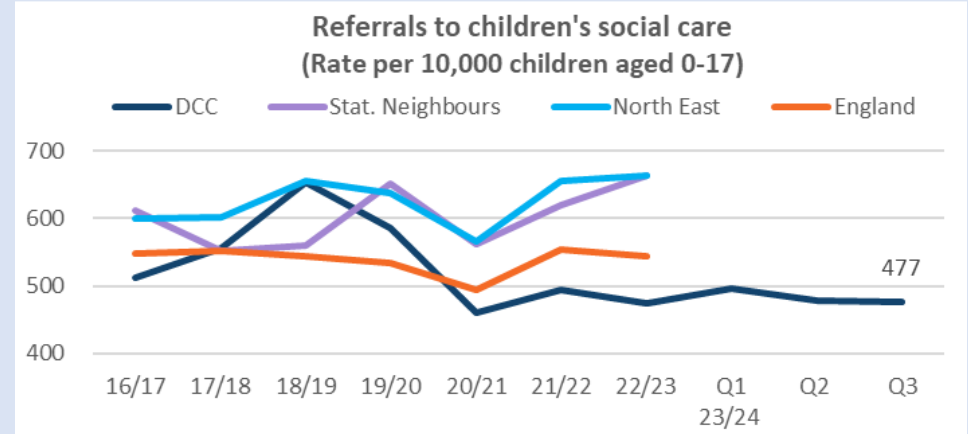
(12 months ending 31 December 2023 / at 31 December 2023)

Early Help

- Demand reduced post-Covid, partly due to a change in operating model with more work led by partners through early help conversations.
- 15 Family Hubs were launched in April 2023. The hubs provide 'one stop shop' access to family support (from conception to age 19, or 25 years for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities). 2,139 people have registered with Family Hubs, including 201 children aged 0-6 months.
- Feedback from families and young people working with the service continues to be positive: 90% of parent/carers, 87% of children and 88% of young people are happy or very happy with the support they received.
- 2,501 assessment forms have been submitted through the Early Help Assessment Portal since it was launched in October 2022, with 18% (458) from partners who are leading on assessments, and 6% (143) about Child and Family Plans, evidencing progress being made with families. Q3 figures are shown below.

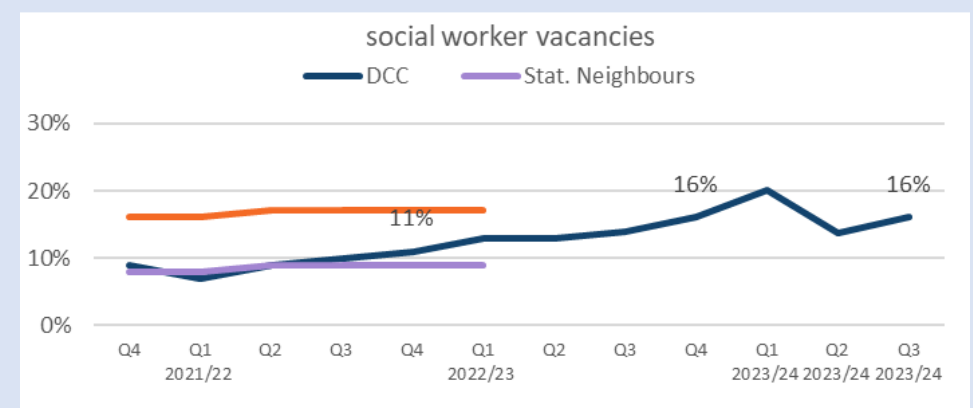
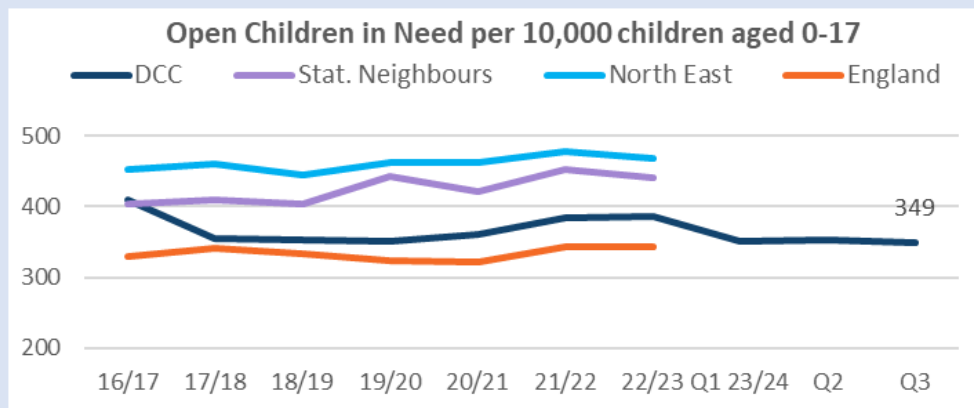
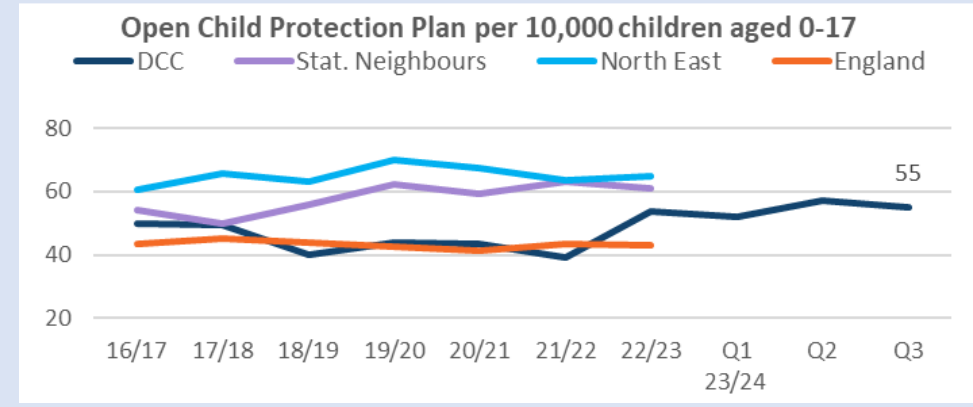
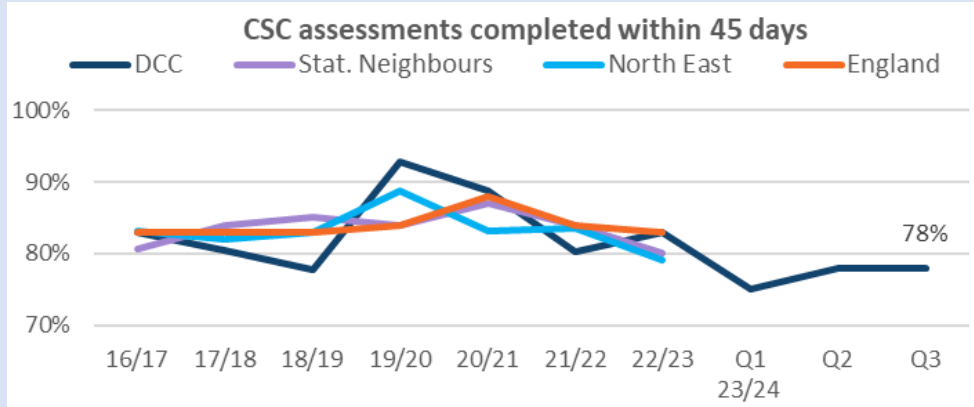


Referrals



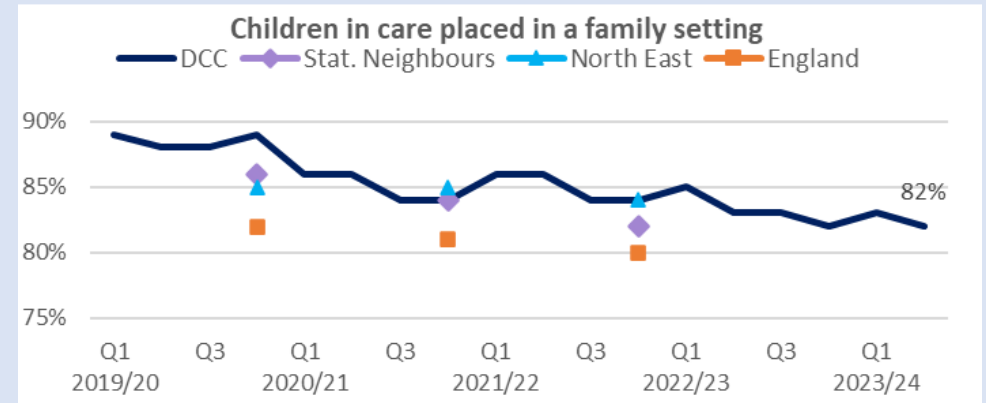
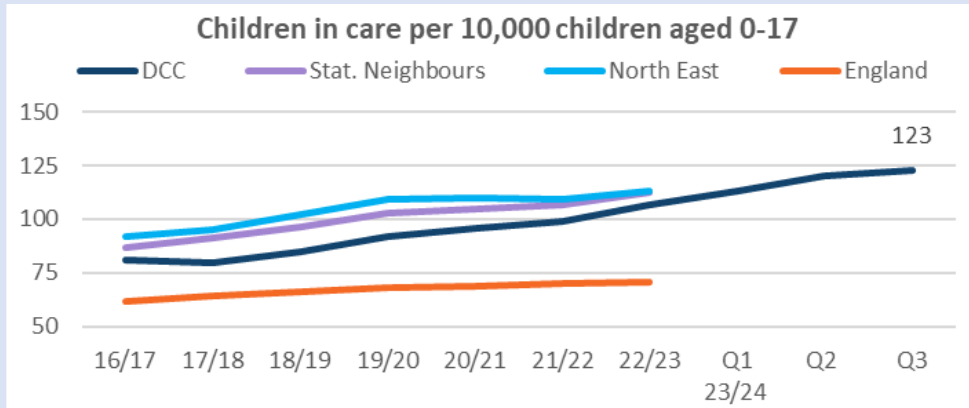
Children's Social Care Dashboard: assessments, protection plans, in need, social worker vacancies

(12 months ending 31 December 2023 / at 31 December 2023)

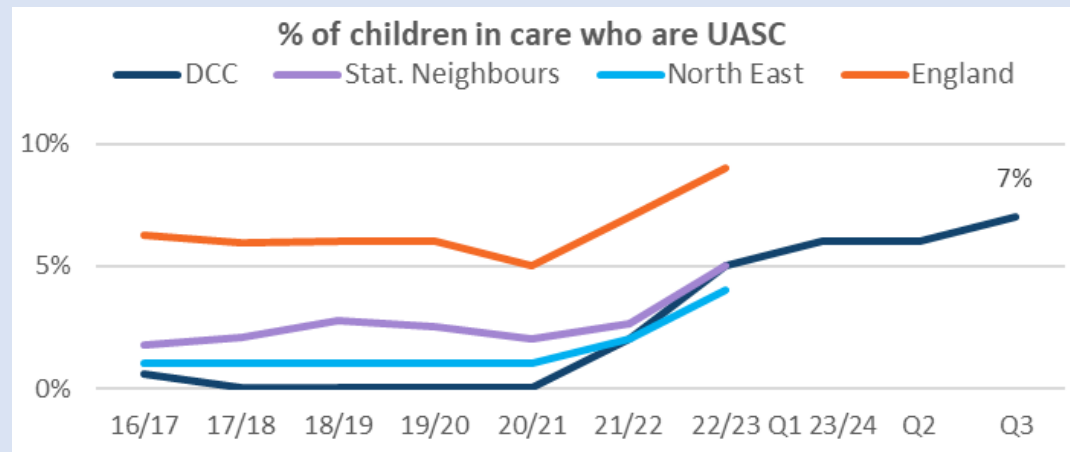


Children's Social Care Dashboard: in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children

(12 months ending 30 September 2023 / at 30 September 2023)



More children are in care, and this is driving the reduction in the proportion living in a family setting.



Children's Social Care and Early Help

- 16 Overall demand for early help and statutory support remains consistent with previous reports. The recent reductions in cases open to Early Help should be seen within the context of a transformed Early Help model in Durham.
- 17 The service has worked with key partners, children, young people, parents and carers to develop a new Early Help Assessment for partners based on Durham's Signs of Safety practice model, this was launched in October 2022. The purpose being to provide a richer picture of early help offered and the impact on children, young people, and families across County Durham.
- 18 There are a number of partners who are using the new assessment where a Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangement is in place. The Prevention and Early Help Partnership continue to work with partners who are not engaging in this process to understand barriers and work with them on a solution focussed approach. This will then provide a much more accurate picture of the early help support to families delivered across the system.
- 19 Locality Early Help Conversations are well established within County Durham. When a child's needs cannot be met by universal services alone, quality conversations strengthen and improve decision making and joint working to provide the right help at the right time for families. These conversations often identify that family's needs can be met without a formal referral into the LA Early Help Service (OPS) and so the collective resource from across the system is utilised. The establishment of the Family Hub and Start for Life Offer provides families with the support they need that is much more accessible.
- 20 A wide-ranging programme of activity and support is being delivered in Family Hubs, and at other venues, with partners. Examples of delivery include:
 - 166 children and young people have taken part in the EWB programme (Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour), with courses including Chill Kids, Teen Zone, Safer Choices, and Staying Cool Teen. 125 completed a course with 105 reporting a positive outcome.
 - 72 people started Parenting Programmes such as Fearless, Stepping Stones, Strengthening Families, Triple P Teen, Incredible Years Baby, and Incredible Years. 51 completed a course with 47 reporting a positive outcome.
 - Universal programmes Baby and Me and Toddler and Me were attended by 475 and 254 parents respectively.
 - 144 people attended Growing Healthy Drop-In sessions.
 - 50 people attended Infant Feeding sessions.
 - Weekly Victim Survivor groups are hosted at Family Hubs in Stanley and Durham and run by Harbour. On average, 4-5 women attend each session.
 - In Q3, 20 families were referred to the RYPP (Respect Young People's Programme). 45 families were engaged, and 13 families completed the programme. 13 families did not complete the programme, with some being offered wider support by Harbour.
 - In Q3, the DART programme (Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together) was completed by 3 families. A further 2 families were offered wider support after it was

determined the programme was not appropriate for their needs. A holistic and intensive pre-assessment process, including the completion of a readiness assessment, is provided by Harbour.

- 21 Improved practice across statutory children's social care has led to a consistently low re-referral rate. The rate at quarter three (16%) is in line with quarter two (16%) and is better than latest benchmarks. This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 22 Although statutory demand remains low, children and young people receiving intensive support (children on a Child Protection Plan and taken into our care) remains relatively high. This is indicative of ongoing high levels of complexity and a change in the composition of demand.
- 23 Specifically, children in care continues to increase. The North East has the highest level in England and County Durham is slightly worse than the North East. Underlying growth in the number of children in care is continuing but is accelerating further due to an increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) placed in the county as part of national relocation plans. Seven percent of children in care are UASC, compared to 5% at the end of 2022/23 and just 2% at the end of 2021/22.
- 24 The number of children in care who are residents of the county is also increasing. We are reviewing these trends and learning will feed into our strategic placement sufficiency work and preparation for the implementation of the Care Review proposals.
- 25 Over the summer, we have been addressing the capacity issues arising from high caseloads which have been impacting the timeliness of statutory children's social care assessments. Quarter three's performance (78%) is in line with national and regional benchmarks. The service continues to monitor.
- 26 Our first newly qualified social worker recruitment process of the year is now complete. Fourteen people are expected to join in the summer. Our next recruitment drive is expected to commence soon.

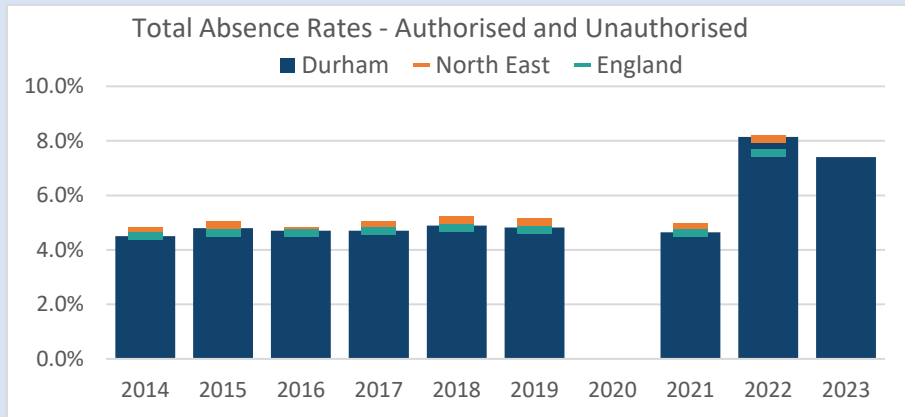
Education Dashboard

(Academic year 2022/23 / as at 30 September 2023)

Attendance

School attendance improved in 2023 but remains worse than pre-pandemic levels. School Attendance improved in the autumn term of the 2023/24 academic year but remains worse than pre-pandemic levels.

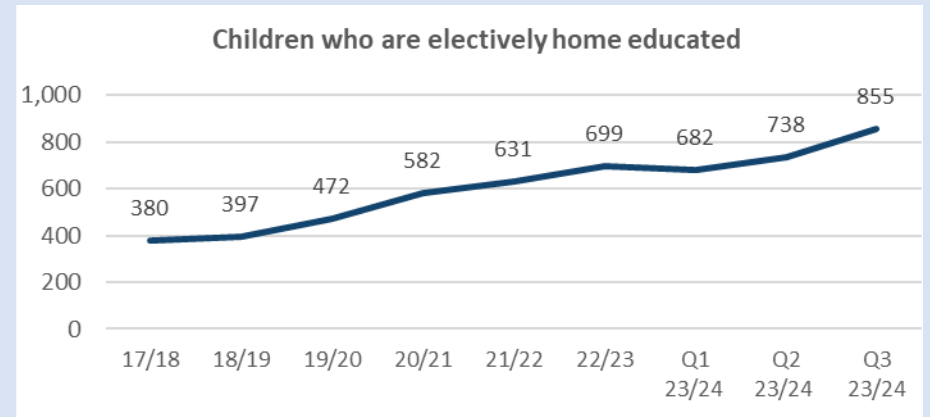
Unauthorised absence makes up one-third of all absences in the 2023/24 academic year.



schools closed due to Covid-19

Elective Home Education

Annual data is based on end of academic years and accounts for year 11 leavers and is also the reason for a dip in Q1 data.



Attendance

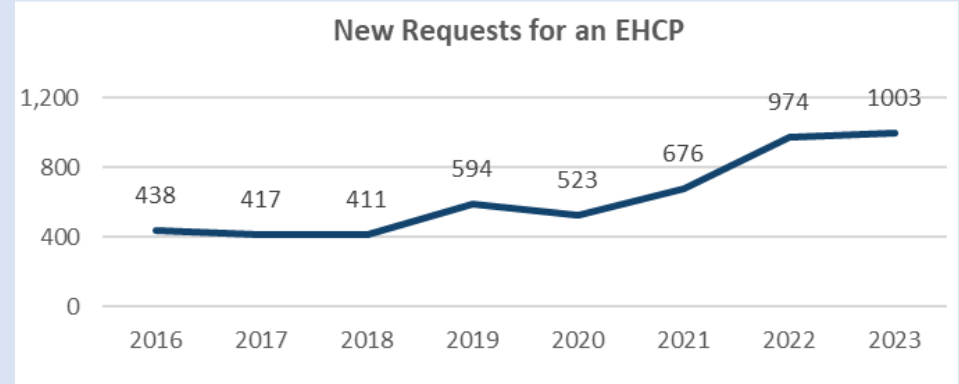
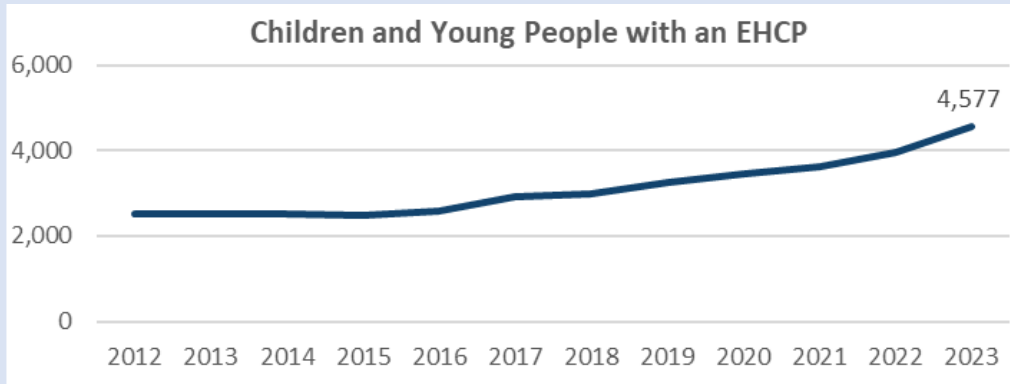
- 27 The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual pupils and families. These barriers were exacerbated by the pandemic and school attendance rates nationally, locally and regionally have reduced. Latest data for the autumn term 2023/24 shows that attendance improved with overall absence rates reducing to 7% in the autumn term of the current academic year from 8% in the previous academic year.
- 28 High attendance levels are essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance compared to those with the lowest attainment.
- 29 The service has a strategic approach to improving attendance delivered through the School Attendance Team. This team works with all schools to reduce or remove barriers to attendance and provide opportunities for schools to share support and best practice. Specifically, this includes holding regular conversation with schools offering support to identify, discuss and signpost to services for pupils who are, or who are at risk of becoming, persistently absent from school.

Elective Home Education

- 30 Children being home educated continues to rise locally, regionally, and nationally. However, the proportion of children and young people electively home educated in County Durham remains low (fluctuating between 0.9% and 1.2%).
- 31 We continue to have strong multi-agency Education at Home operational and strategic groups that are well established, meet half termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding of children.

SEND Dashboard

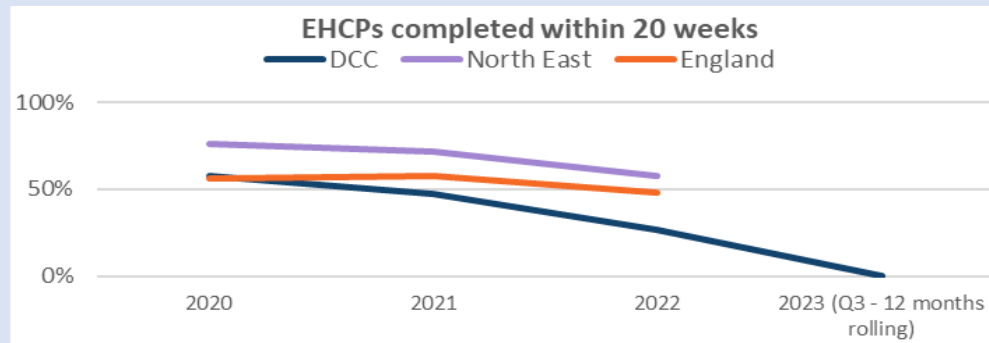
(12 months rolling / annual data)



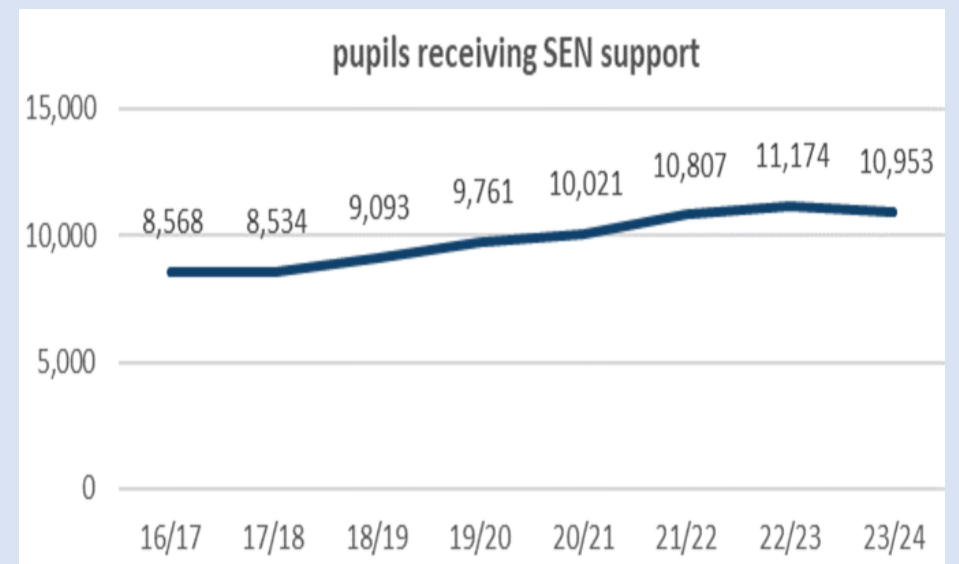
EHCPs completed in 20 weeks

Higher demand alongside a national shortage of educational psychologists (EP) and the time it takes to commission and agree suitable provision has meant no new EHCPs were fully completed and agreed within the expected 20-week timescale during the quarter.

Work continues to improve this, including managing demand through our graduated offer and increasing our EP advice capacity.



Special Educational Need Support



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- 32 Requests for new EHCPs increased substantially between 2019 and 2022 and continue at a very high level in 2023. The assessment process is complex with a number of inputs required from schools, social care and health services in line with the statutory guidance.
- 33 Some key points in the process are currently causing timeliness delays. The first is a national shortage of educational psychologists (EP) needed to undertake the required assessment, the timeliness of education provider responses to consultation and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision.
- 34 A comprehensive action plan is in place which seeks to address these challenges and improve timeliness rates, particularly in relation to the backlog for EP advice which will continue to cause a timeliness issue until the backlog of requests has been cleared.
- 35 A web page, developed to promote working in the service, is now live [Working as an Educational Psychologist in County Durham](#). National and regional social media promotion commenced in November 2023 and is being continued in the North East through promoted posts via Facebook. Some overseas recruitment through agencies is underway, resulting in recruitment of two EPs and further interviews to take place.
- 36 In addition to increasing core team capacity, the service has been working with two agencies to add significant temporary support to bolster local capacity and help reduce waiting times. New contracts are in place from quarter three and agencies are working to build their own capacity to deliver against their contract outcomes. Increased capacity is already having an impact as the number of children awaiting allocation to an EP has reduced significantly in recent months.
- 37 During 2024, if agencies deliver against their agreed contract volumes, in-house EP capacity is maintained, and demand does not increase further, we expect the waiting times and waiting list for EP advice to steadily reduce. However, as EP advice is only part of a complex process it will take time for this to impact on the overall 20-week EHCP target. This area is being regularly reviewed with enhanced operational performance monitoring.
- 38 The service has reviewed their allocation processes and after an equality impact assessment process, have introduced the ability to prioritise cases based on complexity of need, the educational stage in relation to key transitions, and the potential increased risk of harm as a result of delay, ensuring those most in need get support at the earliest opportunity. The revised processes now ensure there are no delays for children and young people identified as a priority.
- 39 The SEND Local Partnership has recognised the potential impacts on families waiting for services and established a “Waiting Well” group to develop a range of responses to ensure families are supported and informed whilst they wait for specialised services. Work is now being undertaken by all partners to ensure:
- All services develop clear policy and guidance on supporting parents/carers and young people to Wait Well.
 - Waiting Well should be a consideration from the first point of contact with a parent or carer, and draft questions to support dialogue have been discussed with Making Changes Together our parent carer forum.

- All services establish an approach to gathering feedback that informs practice development over time.
- There is a sustainable approach to workforce development that ensures a good level of understanding of the support available and how to navigate it for/with families.
- That services improve the quality and use of digital resources.

40 Work through our Delivering Better Value programme also seeks to reduce the need for new EHCP requests and support more children through our graduated offer of support.

Data Tables

D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
				Household waste re-used, recycled or composted	Oct 22 – Sep 23	36.5%	Tracker	37.7%	April 21 – March 22	38.1%	42.5%	33.5%	Yes	Yes

D = Direction of Travel	T = compared to target	C = compared to England average	G = Gap between our performance and England average
meeting or exceeding the previous year	better than target	Better than the England average	The gap is improving
worse than the previous year but is within 2%	Worse than but within 2% of target	Worse than the England average but within 2%	The gap remains the same
more than 2% worse than the previous year	more than 2% behind target	Worse than the England average	The gap is deteriorating

This is the overall performance assessment. Its calculation is dependent upon whether the indicator has an agreed target.

Key Target Indicator	Key Tracker Indicator
targets are set as improvements, can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners. When setting a target, the D, C and G have already been taken into account.	no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners. Therefore, D, T, C and G are used to assess overall performance
better than target	Direction of Travel (D) is meeting or exceeding the previous year AND the gap with England (G) is improving
worse than but within 2% of target	Direction of Travel (D) is worse than the previous year OR the gap with England (G) is deteriorating
more than 2% behind target	Direction of Travel (D) is worse than the previous year AND the gap with England (G) is deteriorating

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

Our Economy: summary data tables

Employability and Skills KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					16-17-year-olds in an apprenticeship	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	Tracker	8.5%	Apr-Jun 23	7.3%	4.8%	7%	No	No

Education KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Uptake of free early education entitlement for 3-4-year-olds	2024	95.4%	Tracker	93.7%	2024	95.4%	93.7%	98.6%	Yes	No
					Children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at KS2	2024	59%	Tracker	65%	2024	59%	60%	61%	Yes	No
					Average grade of achievement within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5	2021/22	4.65	5 by 2030	new					No	No
					Disadvantaged cohorts meeting basic threshold measures in English and Maths	new			new					No	No
					Young people in education, employment and training	Jun 2023	93.8%	above N / NE	94.2%	Jun 2023	93.8%	95%	93.9%	Yes	No

Our People: summary data tables

Childrens' Social Care KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Early help cases open	as at Dec 23	1,249	Tracker	1,296					Yes	No
					Children's social care referrals per 10,000 population	as at Dec 23	477	Tracker	473	2022/23	473	545	663	Yes	No
					Children's social care re-referrals	as at Dec 23	16%	Tracker	15%	2022/23	15%	21%	22%	Yes	No
					Children's social care assessments completed within 45 days	as at Dec 23	78%	Tracker	83%	2022/23	83%	83%	79%	Yes	No
					Children in need per 10,000 population	as at Dec 23	349	Tracker	387	2022/23	387	343	467	Yes	No
					Children on a child protection plan per 10,000 population	as at Dec 23	55	Tracker	54	2022/23	54	43	65	Yes	No
					Children looked after per 10,000 population	as at Dec 23	123	Tracker	107	2022/23	107	71	113	Yes	No
					Care leavers aged 16-24	as at Dec 23	311	Tracker	283					Yes	No
					Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a percentage of all children in care	as at Dec 23	7%	Tracker	5%	2022/23	5%	9%	4%	Yes	No
					Social worker vacancies	Oct-Dec 23	16%	Tracker	14%	Jan-Mar 22	11%	17%		Yes	No
					Children in care in a family setting	Oct-Dec 23	81%	Tracker	83%	Jan-Mar 22	84%	80%	84%	Yes	No
					Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	2023/24	983	1,230	581					No	No

Education KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development	2022/23	66.2%	Tracker	64.5%	2022/23	66.2%	67.2%	66.3%	Yes	No
					Pupils attending a school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	84.5%	Tracker	83.1%	2023/24	84.5%	88.1%	87%	Yes	No
					Pupils attending a primary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	94.3%	Tracker	94.3%	2023/24	94.3%	91.6%	94.6%	Yes	No
					Pupils attending a secondary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	70%	Tracker	75.3%	2023/24	70%	83.8%	76.8%	Yes	No
					Children who are electively home educated	Oct-Dec 23	855	Tracker	699					Yes	No
					Children eligible for free school meals	2023/24	32.4%	Tracker	30.6%	2023/24	32.4%	24.8%	14.8%	Yes	No
					Take-up on free school meals	2022/23	23%	Tracker	20.6%	2022/23	23%	18.6%	23.8%	No	No

SEND KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Children and young people with an EHCP	2023	4,577	Tracker	3,975					Yes	No
					New requests for EHCPs	2023	986	Tracker	974					Yes	No
					EHCPs completed within 20 weeks	Jan-Dec 2023	0%	Tracker	27%	2023	0%	48%	56%	Yes	No
					Pupils on SEN support	2023/24	10,953	Tracker	11,174					Yes	No

Public Health KPIs

	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Children aged 4-5 who are a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	2022/23	73.2%	100%	75.5%	2022/23	73.2%	77.5%	74%	Yes	No
					Children aged 10-11 who are a healthy weight <i>Confidence intervals +/-1.2pp</i>	2022/23	59.1%	100%	59.2%	2022/23	59.1%	61.9%	58.9%	Yes	No
					Gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	2022/23	19.0pp	Tracker	18.7pp					Yes	No

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