



Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Friday 20 September 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 11 July 2024 (Pages 3 - 12)
- 4 Declarations of Interest, if any
- 5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties
- 6 Support for School Energy Management and Carbon Reduction
 - A) Report of the Corporate Director Children and Young People Services (Pages 13 - 18)
 - B) Presentation by Sustainability Education Development Advisor (Pages 19 - 40)
- 7 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update
 - A) Report of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 41 - 46)
 - B) Presentation by Strategic Manager SEND Strategy & Assessment and Strategic Manager Specialist Inclusion and Principal Educational Psychologist (Pages 47 - 68)
- 8 Home to School Transport Update
 - A) Report of Corporate Management Team (Pages 69 - 80)
 - B) Presentation by Corporate Data and Insight Manager (Pages 81 - 96)

- 9 Quarter 4 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Outturn and Quarter 1 2024/25 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn - Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services (Pages 97 - 128)
- 10 Quarter 1 2024/25 Performance Management Report - Report of the Chief Executive (Pages 129 - 158)
- 11 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Helen Bradley
Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
12 September 2024

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

Councillor A Reed (Chair)
Councillor C Hunt (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bell, J Cosslett, R Crute, S Deinali, K Fantarrow, J Griffiths, K Hawley, C Lines, L Mavin, D Mulholland, K Rooney, J Scurfield, M Simmons, S Townsend, C Varty, E Waldock and M Walton

Faith Communities Representatives:

Mrs L Vollans

Parent Governor Representatives:

Professor Gosia M Ciesielska and Mr P Debrett-Watson

Co-opted Members:

Ms A Gunn

Contact: Michelle Lagar

Tel: 03000 269 701

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

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

At a meeting of the **Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 11 July 2024** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor A Reed (in the Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Hunt (Vice-Chair), J Clark (for Councillor S Townsend), R Crute, S Deinali, L Fenwick (for Councillor J Griffiths), C Lines, L Mavin, D Mulholland, K Rooney, J Scurfield, C Varty and E Waldock.

Co-opted Member:

Angela Gunn

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Griffiths, K Hawley, S Townsend, M Walton, Prof G Ciesielska and Mrs L Vollans.

2 Substitute Members

Councillors J Clark and L Fenwick substituted for Councillors S Townsend and J Griffiths respectively.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 March 2024 and 26 April 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Any items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

No items from Co-opted Members or other interested parties were raised.

6 Annual Update of the Starting Well Partnership

The Committee received a report of the Chair of the Starting Well Partnership, County Durham Care Partnership and Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services on the work of the Starting Well Partnership (SWP) during 2023/24 which provided an update on outstanding work from the last report (2022/23) as well as work undertaken in 2023/24 (for copy of report and presentation see file of minutes).

Alison Ayres, Commissioning Manager for Children's Services, County Durham Integrated Commissioning Team, was welcomed to the meeting to deliver the presentation. The Commission Manager introduced the presentation by providing a refresh on the structure and governance of the Starting Well Partnership and its four sub-groups namely; Best Start in Life, Prevention and Early Help, Supporting Young People into Adulthood and Service Transformation.

The Commissioning Manager provided an update on some of the matters highlighted for discussed during 2023/24. The Committee heard that work was ongoing to identify recurrent funding to continue the Pause pilot which assists families with multiple children removed from their care to break the cycle of repeated removals.

During the year, the Committee also considered mental health issues and one of the outcomes of their discussions was the inclusion of representation by the police on the Autism Steering Group.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People (UASC) were also an area of focus and the Committee discussed that UASC should be screened for their mental health as well as their physical health, on initial entry into care. The Commissioning Manager informed the Committee that this work was ongoing as initial health assessments were required to be undertaken within a statutory timeframe, however, the undertaking of mental health assessments within the same, relatively short, timescale may not be appropriate for UASC, many of whom will have suffered trauma. In addition, some UASC assigned to Durham's care, resided outside of the county and that was a factor in the work.

The Commissioning Manager introduced the partnership priorities for 2024/25 which included dental access, dental health and fluoridation. Whilst the Committee was keen to consider those issues during the current year, initiatives associated with the work had just begun and it was therefore considered prudent to delay the work until those initiatives were established. With regard to Preparing for Adulthood, the work in 2024/25 will have a broad perspective and include education, employment and training and mental health issues associated with education attendance.

Ensuring the provision of help, advice and support at the earliest opportunity will also be a priority for 2024/25. The Committee noted the Starting Well Partnership was responsible for the Growing Up in County Durham Strategy and the Operational Management Group determined the areas of focus for presentations to the partnership, considering the objectives of the Growing up in County Durham strategy and the four Starting Well Partnership sub-groups. The Commissioning Manager provided details of the workstreams for each of the sub-groups.

The Commissioning Manager concluded the presentation by commenting on the key challenges for the future including the increased demand for services, complexity of cases, limited resources and staff workloads.

The Chair thanked the Commissioning Manager for the presentation and the Commissioning Manager answered questions from the Committee.

In response to a question from the Chair as to whether any trends had been identified in relation to the number of unintentional injuries, the Commissioning Manager responded that recent data showed an increase in unintentional injuries across all age groups, however, the increase was not equal across all age groups. The unintentional injuries were predominantly fractures of the forearm, inter-cranial injuries and superficial injuries of the head, i.e. injuries consistent with trips / falls. Evidence suggested that zero-length stays, which occur when a patient attends hospital for a number of hours only, were driving the data.

Councillor Clark questioned whether, in previous years, when there may have been less pressure on services, zero-length stay patients would have been admitted to hospital overnight. The Commissioning Manager replied that pressure on services may be a factor, however, changes in clinical practices may also account for the increase in zero-length stays and she added that she would request further information on the matter.

In response to a question from the Chair as to whether some families were presenting children to hospital with unintentional injuries on a regular basis, the Commissioning Manager agreed to refer to the service for details to be provided.

Angela Gunn acknowledged the importance of monitoring data relating to unintentional injuries, however, she pointed out that children naturally engage in adventurous play which can inevitably result in accidental injuries.

Councillor Scurfield expressed concern at the increase in the number of unintentional injuries, commenting that it would be useful to have more information, particularly in relation to the number of repeat incidents and she suggested that the issue should be considered as a priority action.

The Commissioning Manager agreed to pass the comments and the request for more detailed information to the Best Start in Life Team.

The Corporate Performance Manager urged caution with respect to the data on unintentional injuries, stating that coding issues within the Trust's data may have led to Durham having a higher rate than that of neighbouring Trusts.

The Chair raised a question on the child weight management service provided by Harrogate District Foundation Trust and the Commissioning Manager explained the approach was an evidence-based, holistic approach to weight management, over a period of time. There had been issues with regard to the retention of families for the duration of the programme, however, the situation was improving and the service was now being delivered through Family Hubs.

Councillor Clark referred to the retention of families on the programme and she asked if there had been any follow-up work done with families to identify underlying reasons for their failure to complete the programme. Councillor Clark suggested that high turnover of staff and a lack of consistency in the service may be factors in the drop-off rate. The Commissioning Manager replied that engagement issues had been addressed and a text message reminder service had been implemented. She added that she would request information from the service as to what action had been taken in respect of follow-up work.

Councillor Varty commented that she was pleased to see the work undertaken to promote education attendance, highlighting its importance as a foundation for preparing young people for the responsibilities of adulthood. She spoke anecdotally of families who had taken their children out of school, reporting sickness absence when the reason for the absence was, in fact, a family holiday. Councillor Varty pointed out that there was more work to be done to educate parents.

The Children and Young People's Service Manager for Operational Support, Clare Nicholls, shared the concern and she clarified that Department for Education guidance stated that when parents report a child's illness, in general, schools should accept the parent's word and authorise the absence. However, when a child had a number of short-term absences without an underlying cause, schools may request additional information and may unauthorise the absence. The Service Manager highlighted that there had been a change to the Attendance Alliance Group to include representation from a GP and a protocol was being established, to share information between schools and GPs to address medical absences and authorisation issues. The process would help to support parents who require assistance with school refusal and it would also help to identify parents whose children miss school on a regular basis but who do not take their child to the GP, which may raise wider safeguarding concerns.

Angela Gunn highlighted that whilst she supported the principle, there were some children for whom that approach to education attendance would not be appropriate, for example those suffering from school anxiety.

Councillor Hunt gave an example of good practice taking place at a primary school which had employed a member of staff to engage with parents at the school gates, to encourage school attendance through offering incentives, which had led to improved attendance. The Service Manager confirmed that schools share examples of good practice.

Angela Gunn raised the issue of the strict criteria for accessing some social care services which may lead to high functioning autistic children who have complex needs, falling short of meeting the criteria. Jennifer Illingworth, Director of Children and Young People's Integrated Services, informed the Committee that the Preparation for Adulthood work recognised that some young people do not meet the threshold for services and work was being carried out to identify those young people and to promote a needs-led approach. The Commissioning Manager added that one of the aims of the Valuing Neurodiversity work was to remove barriers to services in the future. The Director of Children and Young People's Integrated Services replied that further information on actions would be provided during the next Valuing Neurodiversity update to the Committee.

Expressing her support for the work of the Family Hubs, Councillor Scurfield queried why there were only fifteen hubs throughout the county, in comparison with the former Sure Start Centres which had approximately forty centres spread across the county. Councillor Scurfield asked what information was available to show the hubs were reaching those most in need and she also asked if outreach work was carried out to assist families unable to access the hubs. The Director of Children and Young People's Integrated Services confirmed that outreach work was undertaken and the Commissioning Manager added that some services, such as education psychology services, visited the hubs to offer services. Officers acknowledged that the relatively low number of hubs for the size of the county was an area for improvement and they agreed to provide further information for circulation to the Committee on the work done in respect of hard to reach families.

Councillor Scurfield referred to recent media reports on the high number of children admitted to hospital due to tooth extractions and she requested information on the position in Durham and work being done to increase access to NHS dental services in the county. The Commissioning Manager responded that those issues would be discussed at a future meeting of the Starting Well Partnership, including the impact of recent interventions on the data and information would be shared with the Committee in due course. The Chair commented that the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered oral health and levels of fluoridation in recent months.

Councillor Deinali questioned the work done on neurodiversity in children in our care and she referred to reports of families who had requested support for assessments for neurodiversity symptoms which had been considered by practitioners to be attachment disorder, without an assessment taking place. Some families had also reported frustration at decisions being made about their child, without them having had the opportunity to communicate fully about their child.

The Commissioning Manager explained that symptoms of trauma and neurodiversity may present in similar ways and many young people entering care will have suffered trauma and that trauma was required to be supported prior to an assessment for neurodiversity. The Director of Children and Young People's Integrated Services noted the comments which would be considered during the refresh of panel processes.

In response to a question from Councillor Hunt for information on the issue of bullying in schools, the Service Manager for Operational Support informed the Committee that data in relation to bullying was held at school level and she would request that data be made available for circulation to the Committee.

Resolved:

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

7 Performance Management Report Quarter 4 2023/2024

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive which presented 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 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Stephen Tracey, Corporate Performance Manager was welcomed to the meeting to present highlights from the report. The Committee noted that demand for children's social care remained high since the pandemic, however, re-referral rates were lower than comparators. An increasing number of young people were entering care with complex needs and the partner-led early help model had helped to strengthen capacity to deliver support to families. A steady improvement was observed in school attendance rates and work was underway with partners to develop a protocol for school attendance. Requests for education, health and care plans (EHCPs) had increased substantially since 2019 and an action plan was in place to improve performance. Improvements were expected to show in the data over the course of the coming year.

The Committee heard that the number of children in our care remained relatively high and the Placement Sufficiency Strategy aimed to expand provision of children's homes and ongoing capital investment would ensure existing homes were fit for purpose.

The Corporate Equalities and Strategy Manager highlighted that the number of young people electively home educated increased in quarter four however Durham's rate was in line with the national rate.

At the previous meeting of the Committee, a question was raised on the provision of free child care places in light of the previous government's extension of the national scheme and further information would be provided on the matter in the 2024-25 quarter two report.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and questions and comments were invited.

Councillor Mulholland noted Durham's relatively high rate of social worker vacancies and asked how Durham was performing in relation to recruitment of social workers. The Performance Manager referred to challenges in recruitment, however, over recent months a number of social work apprentices had been recruited. He explained that the retention rate was measured by staff turnover, through analysing the percentage of staff leaving as a percentage of all staff and Durham's turnover was relatively low.

Angela Gunn observed that only one of the four special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) key performance indicators (KPIs) was a performance KPI i.e. the number of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks and she gave the view that the metrics did not give a full picture of performance as they did not measure aspects such as the effectiveness of decision making, the placement of children in appropriate settings, the number of placement breakdowns and the financial impact of placement breakdowns. The Corporate Performance Manager confirmed that those aspects were measured through operational performance monitoring, whilst the performance report aimed to provide an overview and he agreed to pass the comments to the service.

Councillor Scurfield expressed concern at the fall in the percentage of children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at key stage 2 and she asked whether the issue would be addressed through the Starting Well Partnership. The Corporate Performance Manager replied that he would request further details from the Head of Education on action being undertaken and he added that there were national challenges, following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Scurfield also raised concern at the data relating to the number of children aged 4-5 who were of a healthy weight and the Committee noted that healthy weight in children had been the subject of a discussion at the previous meeting.

Referring to the recruitment of social workers, Councillor Varty spoke of the high demand for social workers which had led to an increasingly competitive market and she spoke of the importance of offering good employment terms and conditions in order to recruit and retain staff.

Councillor Lines had attended a number of meetings with parents, officers, local action groups and local MPs with regard to the waiting times for EHCPs and he was pleased to see the number of EHCPs finalised within 20 weeks had increased to 7%. He queried the average length of wait time for the remaining 93% and for the definition of a timely service. The Corporate Equalities and Strategy Manager responded the average length of time was approximately 40 weeks and he pointed out that the average time may be skewed by complex cases. He added that the current system included fast tracking priority cases. The Corporate Performance Manager highlighted that in June, 12% of EHCPs were delivered within 20 weeks and it was hoped the momentum will be maintained and a normal operational level will be achieved by September, at which point, the service would be in a better position to deliver a timely service, i.e. within the statutory 20 week timeframe.

Councillor Scurfield spoke of the unprecedented demand for EHCP services since the Covid-19 pandemic which could not have been predicted or planned for and the impact on young people had continued. She commented that it would be useful to have further information from the service as to the key issues and their views on action for improvement. The Corporate Performance Manager agreed to include national data in the next quarterly report and he referred to challenges for larger authorities in recruiting the number of education psychologists required to meet demand.

In response to a question from Councillor Hunt as to the lack of information on kinship carers, the Corporate Performance Manager agreed to bring additional information on kinship carers to the Committee within the next quarterly report, as part of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

Resolved:

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance (January to March) and the actions being taken to address areas of challenge.

8 Refresh of the Work Programme 2024/25 for the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, presented by Ann Whitton, Overview and Scrutiny Officer which provided the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an updated work programme for 2024/2025 which was appended to the report (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

The Committee noted the work programme was informed by key strategic documents including the Council Plan and County Durham Vision 2035 and the key themes and ambitions applying to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 'Our Economy' and 'Our People'.

Members were asked to consider the proposed work programme for 2024/25, bearing in mind the reduced timescale due to the local elections in May.

Councillor Deinali requested that non-visible disabilities be considered for inclusion in the work programme and the Chair confirmed that non-visible disabilities would be included in the work programme under the SEND update.

In reply to a question from Angela Gunn on the inclusion of neurodiversity, it was clarified that a briefing report on Valuing Neurodiversity was included in the work programme.

Referring to the inclusion of Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Programme (Fun and Food), Mrs Gunn pointed out this had previously been discussed by the Committee on several previous occasions and given the high volume of work, she asked whether its inclusion was required. Stephen Gwilym, Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that, at a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held in April, members expressed concern at the Fun and Food programme, in particular the eligibility criteria and how organisations wishing to participate in delivery of the programme could access funding. The issues remained a concern, together with the uptake and quality of school meals, therefore the item was included in the work programme for an informal information session. Councillor Crute informed the Committee of work in progress to consider a pilot scheme for auto-enrolment for free school meals and an update on the matter would be provided to the Committee in due course.

Resolved:

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Received and commented on the proposed CYPOSC work programme for 2024/2025.
- b) Agreed the work programme for 2024/2025 as attached at appendix 2 and the flexibility it offers to respond to emerging issues.
- c) Agreed to identify a topic for in-depth or light touch review activity.

9 CAMHS Waiting Times

The Committee received a report on the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services CAMHS Waiting Time presented by James Graham, General Manager of Durham and Tees Valley Community CAMHS (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Angela Gunn commended the good work which had led to improvements in the rate of referrals and she added that it would be useful to have details on metrics for the quality of the service.

The General Manager acknowledged there was work to be done on the quality of outcome metrics and it was hoped that the transition to a new patient record system will lead to better quality data in the future, including flow through the system. In relation to the number and type of referrals, the General Manager clarified that a number of patients classed as 'getting help' required targeted, short term interventions therefore patient turnover was high. Those with more complex needs required services for longer time periods. Some of those with complex needs were at high risk of harm and those young people with complex needs accounted for approximately 70% of capacity. Workforce challenges were an issue and work was taking place to explore all possible options to meet needs and support families waiting for services.

In reply to a question from Angela Gunn with regard to the term 'unique' patient count, the General Manager explained that some young people will be open to more than one team and in these cases, the young person was counted against the team that they were initially open to.

Angela Gunn raised the issue of barriers to accessing medication for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and she asked for information on the length of the waiting times for ADHD medication. The General Manager informed the Committee that, from the point of assessment, the current waiting time was approximately 3 to 6 months.

10 Such other business

Councillor Scurfield requested that the Committee receive information on the recent Ofsted Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection and the Chair confirmed an update will be provided at the September meeting of the Committee, within the SEND update.

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

20th September 2024



**Support for Schools for
Energy Management and
Carbon Reduction**

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

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the support available for schools to help them reduce their energy usage, associated costs and carbon emissions.

Executive summary

- 2 Support for participating schools and academies through the Energy Management Service Level Agreement continues to adapt to meet their needs.
- 3 This support is provided by a mix of online tools as well as support from Officers centrally and in-school through our contracted delivery partner.
- 4 Feedback from young people has been sought as part of the Climate Emergency Response Planning.
- 5 The emissions from maintained schools on the council carbon footprint continues to be significant.

Recommendations

- 6 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of the report.

Background

- 7 Schools have been supported with their energy management for many years, and this support has changed and adapted over the years.
- 8 Since 2010 Durham County Council (through its Energy Management SLA and previous Carbon Management Plan) has been supporting schools to reduce their own carbon footprint and engage in energy related learning opportunities.
- 9 Schools are important institutions to help promote wider climate change awareness and understanding as well as practical energy management issues.

Existing Support for Schools

10. The ECO₂ Smart Schools Programme (rebranded in 2018 from School Carbon Reduction Programme) has consistently supported schools since 2010 across the County, that are part of the Energy Management Service Level Agreement. This is managed through the Low Carbon Economy Team (Neighbourhoods and Climate Change) and delivered in partnership with Education Durham support. The in-school support element is contracted and is currently delivered by a Durham based charity OASES. At the start of this financial year we had 242 schools involved – a mix of maintained and academies and all phases.
 - (a) All member schools can access their energy data via the <https://durham.energymanagerlive.com/> portal, enabling them to track and monitor usage.
 - (b) A dedicated website <https://eco2smartschools.org.uk/> provides a wealth of resources for schools, some information is open access, member schools access more once logged in.
 - (c) All member schools receive in-school support – schools can choose each year how they use their allocated support time from a menu of opportunities.
 - (d) A programme of training targeted at different school staff is promoted. Sessions for School Business Managers; Site Staff; teachers and for Governors are offered on a termly basis. Sessions via Teams work well. In person sessions are also offered for teachers.

11. The programme is adapting its support for multi academy trusts to meet their needs as they continue to grow, providing a centralised model upon request to drive forward energy savings.
12. Enlighten – LED Retrofit scheme. A revised framework was developed and made available to schools wishing to install LED lighting in their schools. The revised scheme is with Thorn Lighting who undertake the surveys and specifications. Schools wishing to engage request support from the ECO₂ Smart Schools programme. We then liaise with key staff and can also present the options to the Governing Body before they commit. The installation is then coordinated by DCC Construction Consultancy Service. Loan funding is available to maintained schools to cover the capital cost of the projects. The loan is repaid by the electricity savings made from the more efficient lighting. Due to cost pressures this model is proving difficult to deliver.
13. Solar PV Generation. We have encouraged and supported schools to explore the opportunities for solar photovoltaic electricity generation for many years. The availability of capital investment has often been a problem. Some schools and academies have signed up to schemes with providers who fund the upfront cost. The most common being Solar for Schools (<https://www.solarforschools.co.uk/>). This scheme is based on a power purchase model where schools pay the company for the electricity they use generated from the solar panels on their roof at a lower starting cost than grid electricity.
14. We have also directly supported a smaller number of schools with solar PV systems where they have the capital to invest or where a roof was being replaced or upgraded. Financially this usually provides better returns but the limits to capital investment in schools are a challenge. Solar PV can also be ground mounted where the roof is unsuitable, successful ground schemes include Woodland Primary and St Johns Chapel Primary schools.
15. To date we have been successful with one school bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for Woodland Primary School. This included a full retrofit of the heating system, from oil to 4 air source heat pumps, LED lighting retrofit and a ground mounted solar PV system.
16. DCC submitted a number of maintained school sites to the Low Carbon Skills Fund with Salix Finance. This bid was successful, the funding will enable the development of a decarbonisation plan using external contractors. Schools to benefit are: Cassop Primary School; Cotherstone Primary School; Montalbo Nursery and Primary School;

Nettlesworth Primary School; Ramshaw Primary School; Durham Trinity School and Sports College and Walworth School.

It has been difficult to develop future school projects due to the limitations in providing matched funding for the PSD Scheme. It is nationally very competitive, but Salix have allocated a third of the funding for schools which may help moving forward.

International Engagement

17. We took the opportunity to link our educational support with the COP26 event that was hosted in Glasgow in 2021. Working in partnership with the International Office, Durham University and OASES we developed a series of online live sessions to enable pupils from County Durham schools to ask questions of an expert panel and interact and share their learning with pupils from schools from around the world. These sessions are called ECO2COP.
18. Since the first sessions in Autumn 2021 we have now successfully run three online conference programmes.
19. ECO2COP28 being the most recent took place on 6th and 7th December 2023. Over 100 schools from 16 countries took part in the interactive, sessions. Pupils were encouraged to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences of climate change, and had the opportunity to ask their climate change and energy questions to a panel of experts. Schools also made pledges of climate action for the year ahead. In addition, educational resources were developed for teachers in advance of the online sessions for different age groups (ages 7-9, 9-11 and 11+).
<https://eco2smartschools.org.uk/eco2cop28schoolsclimateconference/>
20. A follow up session took place as part of Durham Global Week on 28th February to learn from Durham University staff who attended COP28 in Dubai, about what was achieved at the event and what is planned for COP29 in Azerbaijan. New ECO2COP29 sessions will coincide with COP29 in Azerbaijan this year on 13th & 14th November for primary and secondary schools.

Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy

21. The Department for Education produced a new strategy for Sustainability and Climate Change in April 2022. It aims to make the UK a world leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030.
22. Additional support for schools is being structured through a series of national programmes. The first is the National Education Nature Park

(<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>) . Two new programmes have recently been announced that will provide an online resource hub and regional support throughout England through the Climate Ambassadors programme. We are liaising with national partners to align this additional support with our existing programmes.

Climate Emergency Response Planning

21. Education and Awareness raising has been a key theme of the climate emergency response plans to date, with the influence of young people and schools being seen as important routes to engage young people and their families and communities.
22. As part of the planning for the latest CERP3 we worked with the Durham Youth Council to develop a simple survey for young people to complete. This was also shared by the Youth Council and through ECO2 Smart Schools and we received over 550 responses. Their key feedback has influenced the development of the latest CERP.
23. The carbon emissions from schools and academies are significant and are providing a real challenge to Durham meeting its climate targets. Maintained school emissions are included in the 2030 Durham Net Zero target and Academies included in the countywide 2045 target outlined in the Climate Emergency Response Plan 3, agreed by Cabinet on 10th July 2024. A new sub group of the Net Zero Investment and Monitoring Board has been established to direct, prioritize and enable whole school retrofit projects with maintained schools.

Conclusion

24. There is a wide range of support available for schools across County Durham helping them with their energy management and learning. Support is flexible to meet the needs of schools and is adapting to meet the needs of multi academy trusts as they expand.

Maintained school emissions will be a key focus moving forward towards the 2030 net zero target. To achieve it will require significant capital investment to decarbonise their operations.

Background papers

- none

Authors

Richard Hurst 07823 445508

Stephen Beresford 03000 265539

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Children and young people have been consulted through Durham Youth Council and the ECO2 Smart Schools programme to influence CERP3

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

No implications

Human Rights

No implications

Climate Change

This activity is helping to reduce DCC climate impacts

Crime and Disorder

No implications

Staffing

No implications

Accommodation

Emissions from schools and academies are a significant element of our carbon emissions and in many cases linked to underinvestment in the school estate over many years.

Risk

Not supporting schools and academies would likely increase carbon emissions and associated energy costs

Procurement

Sustainability, environmental impacts and social value are all included in procurement regulations



CYP and ESC Overview and Scrutiny

Support for Schools for Energy Management and Carbon Reduction 20th September 2024

Rich Hurst, Education Advisor -
Sustainability

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Agenda Item 6b

Overview

- Overview of the support for school energy management
- Energy saving technology support
- Department for Education Sustainability and Climate Strategy overview
- CERP 3



Background

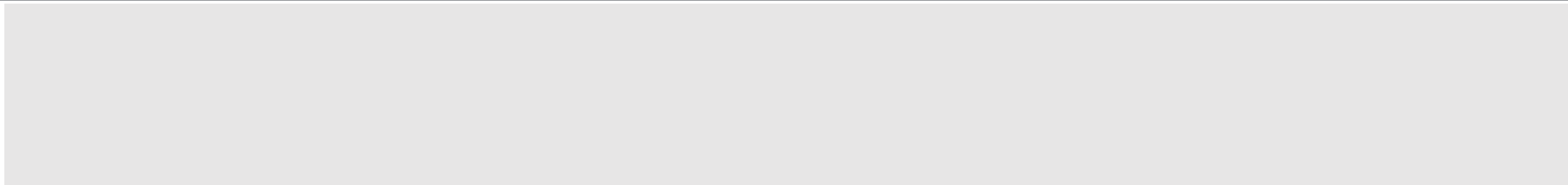
- The ECO2 Smart Schools programme is the schools facing brand for the support given through the Schools Energy Management Service Level Agreement
- We have over 90% take up from schools across the County
- We regularly review the offer to schools and academies to try to ensure that we meet their needs and if issues from the energy data suggest that there are issues that a wide range of schools may have. E.g. out of hours heating/ base load of electricity etc
- Schools have faced significant increases in cost of utilities over the past few years. They are unlikely to return to pre-Ukraine war prices



Example Energy Manager Live Access Page



Site Summary



Data Sets Dashboards Reports Add Readings Exceptions

Dashboard: All site Reference Date: 08/02/2024

Welcome

If you want to discuss reducing your building's carbon impact, contact us on: energy@durham.gov.uk

If you would like help with using this web portal we can arrange some training with a member of DCC's carbon team. Contact energy@durham.gov.uk to request it.

Use the tabs at the top to navigate the site:
Data Sets - view your site's individual supplies
Dashboards - overview of site - choose a topic from the menu above - there's more information about

Covid-19

The way we have been using our buildings in 2020 and 2021 has changed significantly compared with previous years. Many buildings have been closed or at minimal occupancy for many months. This means that our two year comparison graphs are going to look a bit strange for a while.
For most sites we should expect electricity consumption to be lower in 2020 than in previous

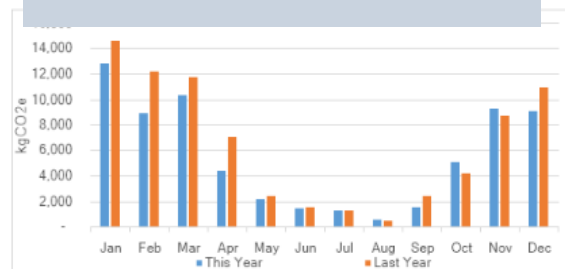
Display Energy Certificates

All public buildings over 250m2 must have a Display Energy Certificate, DEC. It must be displayed in the main entrance of the building, in colour, and no smaller than size A3.

DECs for most of our buildings are provided by **Compliance 365**. When your existing certificate is due to expire, you may be contacted by **Compliance 365** to arrange a new one.

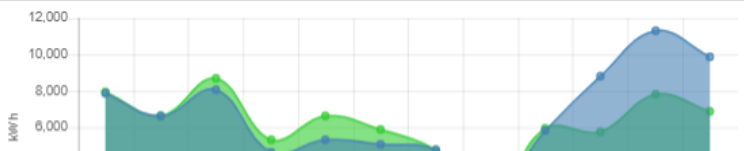
In September 2020 some changes were made to DEC's. They look different, but have all the same information, and must follow the same rules as the old style certificates. Old certificates are still valid

Whole Site Carbon Emissions Comparison

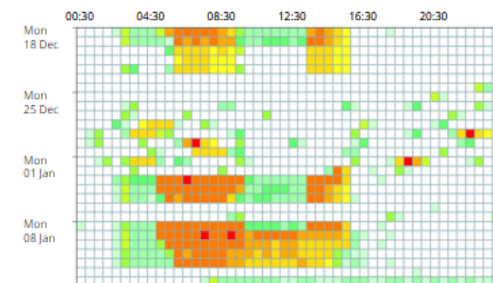


This Year		Last Year	
Month	kgCO2e	Month	kgCO2e
Jan-23	12,829	Jan-22	14,622
Feb-23	8,852	Feb-22	12,148

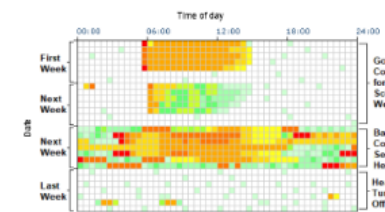
2 Year Electricity Comparison



Gas Use over the half term holidays - half hourly - mouse over for details



Example School - Not Actual Data.



The colours in the graph show how much gas was being used in each half hour. The colours are relative to that month at that site only, so the values can change each month. Red squares indicate the highest gas through-out that month, orange is the second highest and green is the lowest.



Log In

- Smart Schools ▾
- Smart Homes
- Climate Conference ▾
- Resources ▾
- Case Studies
- Contact

The simple way to become an eco-friendly school and save money in the process.

We'll help your school to become environmentally smart, reduce energy bills and support your teaching, all within a curriculum based learning programme.

Find out more

<https://eco2smartschools.org.uk/>
eco2smartschools@oases.org.uk



ECO2 Smart Schools Menu

As part of your energy management SLA with Durham County Council, help your school save energy, and select from a range of sessions catered for both students and staff.

Primary Schools get 4 credits

Secondary Schools get 8 credits

Special Schools get 5 credits

Nursery Schools get 3 credits

Split site schools get an additional 3 credits.

Session	Credits
1 hour eco group/ class session	1
Assembly	1
Energy meeting with SLT/ Caretaker	1
Walk around energy assessment	1
Borrowing equipment e.g. lux meters/ power monitors	1
Energy Manager Live training	1
Retrofitting sustainable technology advice	1

Session	Credits
Award (ECO2 Smart Schools Award, Climate Friendly Schools, eco-schools) advice	1
Staff meeting/ training	2
Governor meeting/ training	2
Full school energy audit	2
1/2 day class/eco group session	2
Full day session	3
Switch off day support	3



[EXTERNAL]:FW: ECO2 Smart Schools Free Training Sessions



Eco2SmartSchools | OASES <ECO2SmartSchools@oases.org.uk>
To Richard Hurst - CYP5

Reply Reply All Forward

Tue 09/01/2024 12:11

Business Manager, Senior Leadership and Caretakers - Monday 15th January (1:30 - 2:30pm)

Governor Training - Monday 15th January (5 - 6pm)

These training sessions will inform you on the DFE Climate and Sustainability Strategy and what support you receive as part of the SLA, with energy saving tips for your school. We will also provide information on local and national energy campaigns your school can get involved in and look at if any funding is available to make your school more energy efficient.



[Book Your Place Now](#)

An example of the online training offered to targeted school staff

During the Spring Term targeted training sessions were undertaken with caretakers/ business managers, teachers and school governors.



ECO2COP Conferences

- These conferences have been really successful and a good example of partnership working between DCC, Durham University and OASES. In 2023 we involved 120 teachers, from 100 schools (50 from County Durham), with 6000 pupils engaged from 16 countries around the world.
- New ECO2COP29 sessions will coincide with COP29 in Azerbaijan this year on 13th & 14th November



Ecosystems - Egypt



Students from Dar El Tarbia shared that their ecosystem in Egypt is a desert, and animals such live there. Higher temperatures and less rainfall a to desertification.



ECO₂ Smart Schools Climate Conference 2023

ECO₂ Smart Schools Climate Conference Education Materials:
In the run up to COP28 in Dubai, use our lessons to engage your students in the climate crisis:

- Lesson 1: Climate Change and Energy
- Lesson 2: Climate Change and Energy Today
- Lesson 3: Climate Change and Energy in the Future

The lessons are available for the following age ranges:

- Ages 7-9
- Ages 9-11
- Ages 11+

Then, use our online platform to share your class' learning with schools from around the world. All the resources are FREE to download, by registering at the link at the bottom of the page.

Live Virtual Climate Conferences

- Your students will interact live with a panel of climate experts.
- Opportunity to share questions and work with international network.
- Different sessions for primary and secondary classes. The two primary sessions are identical, and so only one need be attended.

Classes aged 7-11: Wednesday 6th December – Two sessions: 9.30-10.30am and 1-2pm GMT
Classes aged 11+ : Thursday 7th December – One session: 9.30-10.30am GMT
(These dates and timings may change)

Register your school: <https://forms.office.com/e/gsgFfNjgqc>

Or email: ECO2SmartSchools@oases.org.uk with any questions.



All the sessions have been recorded and can be watched on [YouTube](#)

Enlighten – LED Lighting Retrofit Programme

- LED lights provide a better quality of light, use less energy and usually last longer than other types
- The structure has changed over time. It now uses Thorn Lighting to survey and provide the lighting specification, with B&FM to install. We know some schools/ academies are using other providers
- Most maintained schools fund these projects through the DCC School Loan Scheme from CYPS
- Cost and technical challenges are making currently installations difficult



Solar PV Generation

- This is an option that many schools would like to progress
- There are some challenges such as the roof structural integrity; asbestos, planning for ground mounted systems and capital investment availability
- We'd like more schools to be able to have their own solar generation



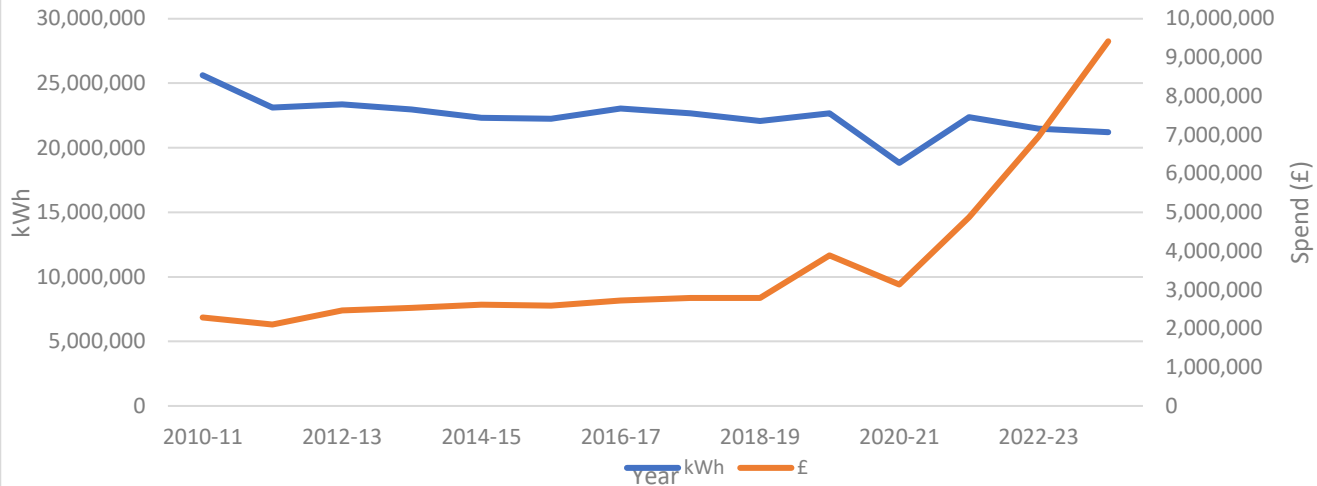
Whole School Retrofit

- Made possible by additional funds from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme
- The scheme replaced an old inefficient oil boiler with 4 air source heat pumps; improved thermal insulation; installed a ground mounted solar array to offset the additional electricity usage of the heat pump and a novel way to retrofit LED's when asbestos is a problem

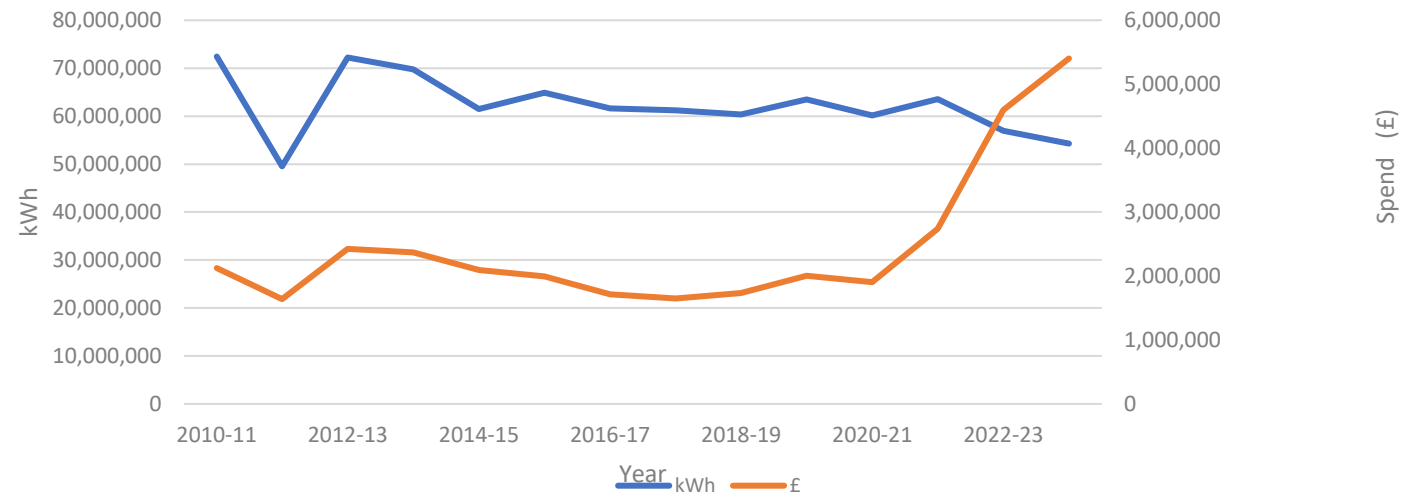


SLA Schools Energy Data

Electricity changes since 2010



Gas changes since 2010



DFE Sustainability and Climate Strategy

Building upon a long history of schools and education settings engaging in environmental/ sustainability issues (e.g. Eco-Schools/ Sustainable Schools, Forest Schools etc). Launched in 2022, at time of writing it is unclear if this will be changed by the new Government.

Vision: the United Kingdom is the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030.

In England, DFE will achieve this through the following strategic aims:

1. Excellence in education and skills for a changing world: preparing all young people for a world impacted by climate change through learning and practical experience.
2. Net zero: reducing direct and indirect emissions from education and care buildings, driving innovation to meet legislative targets and providing opportunities for children and young people to engage practically in the transition to net zero.
3. Resilience to climate change: adapting our education and care buildings and system to prepare for the effects of climate change.
4. A better environment for future generations: enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and increasing access to, and connection with, nature in and around education and care settings.



Action Areas

- 1. Climate Education** – Learning About the Natural Environment; Support for Teaching & Learning in the natural environment
- 2. Green Skills and Careers** – Net Zero Skills Pathways and Support & Guidance for Green Careers
- 3. Education Estate and Digital Infrastructure** – New build schools/ blocks to be net zero in operation (designed for 2°C rise and future proofed for 4°C); Existing Estate – data gathering and retrofit, new operational guidance, new technology pilots inc. Gen Zero platform; Resilience & Adaptation; Heating Solutions; Water Strategy – SUDS, resilience, drought
- 4. Operations and Supply Chains** – support to embed sustainability in decision making; promote circular economy; waste prevention; resource efficiency. All settings to have a Sustainability Lead by 2025
- 5. International** – The UK Foreign Policy Integrated Review positions climate change as the UK’s number one international priority.



Strategic Initiatives

- co-ordinating and leading a whole-setting approach to climate change and sustainability
 - National Education Nature Park (virtual) (<https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/>)
 - [National Climate Education Action Plan](#)
 - By 2025 all education settings to have a Climate Action Plan and Climate Lead
 - New Natural History GCSE by 2025 (may be delayed)
- Carbon Literacy training for at least one person in each education setting
- a published risk assessment of flood, overheating and water scarcity of the education estate, reviewed on an annual basis from 2023
- biodiversity of the education estate, baselined by 2023 to allow annual progress reporting
- on-site emissions from the education estate, baselined by 2024, and progress against national targets published from 2025 onwards.
- A new roadmap to net zero was announced from the DFE to be published this Autumn



Pupil Voice and CERP 3

Page 34



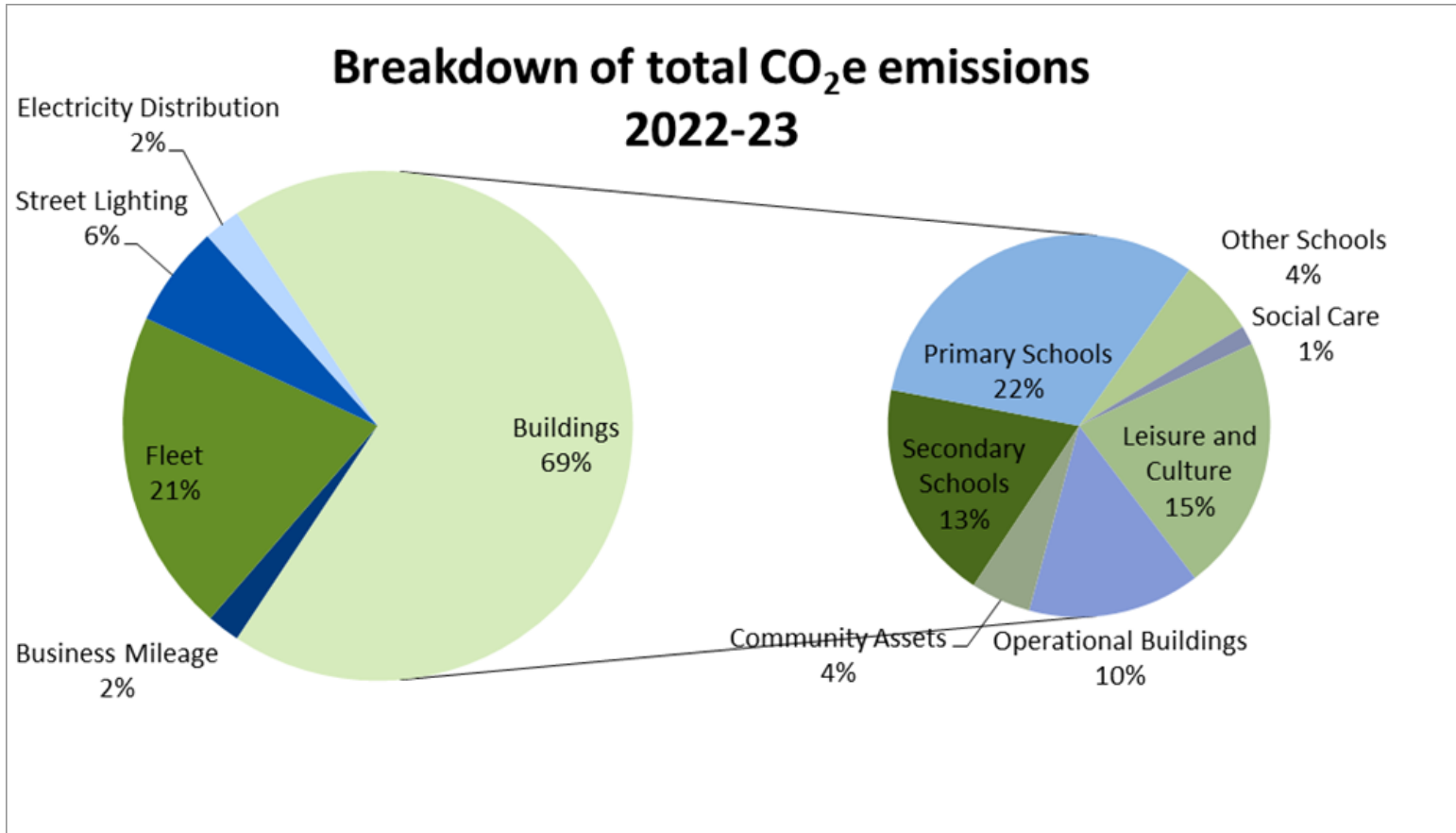
- As part of the planning for the latest CERP3 we worked with the Durham Youth Council to develop a simple survey for young people to complete.
- This was also shared by the Youth Council and through ECO2 Smart Schools and we received over 550 responses which influenced the development of the latest Climate Emergency Response Plan.

Conclusions:

- A good age and gender mix of young people responded
- Most respondents are aware of climate issues and are involved in activities in or out of school
- DCC needs to do better communicating to young people through channels that young people watch/ read/ engage with
- Lots of priority suggestions for actions by DCC – many of which it already does
- Climate anxiety is an issue that DCC needs to better address – but not add to
- The opportunities for 'green jobs' in the region are real and DCC needs to make sure we promote those effectively to young people



Schools/ Academies and CERP3



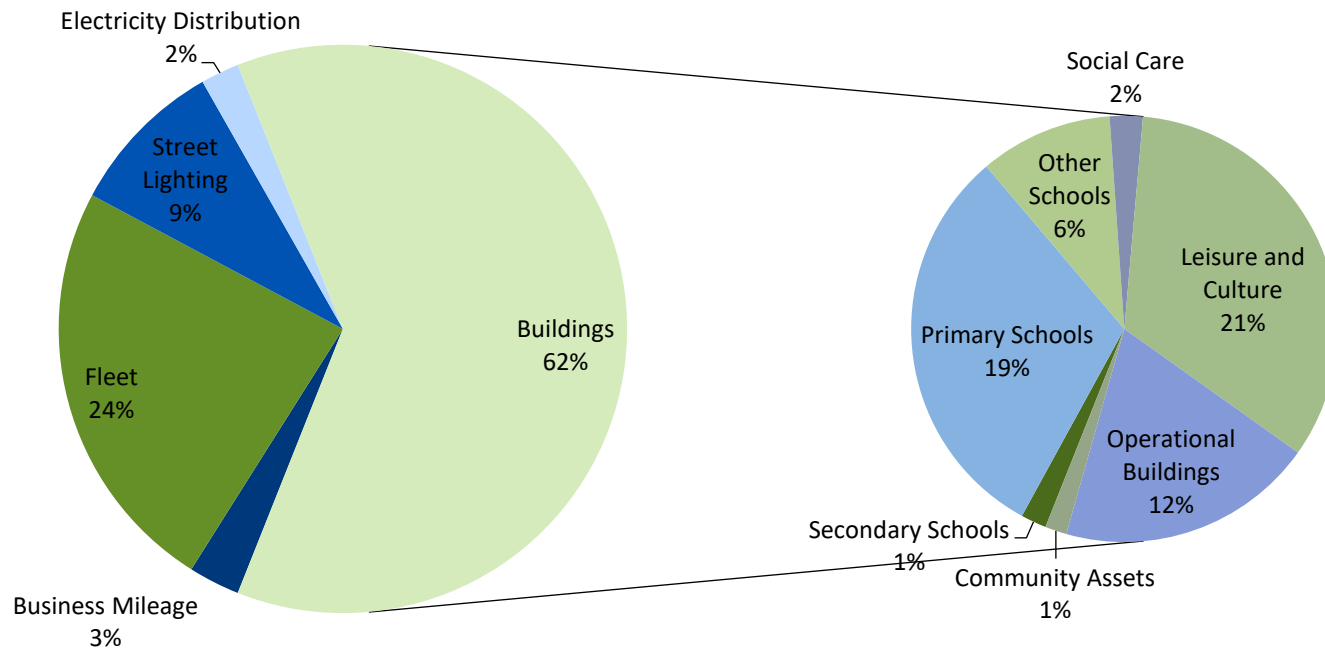
- Schools and academies are a significant part of the councils carbon footprint
- It is a really difficult challenge to meet the net zero targets with the current levels of funding being allocated to schools from central government
- CERP3 covers 2024-2027
- It was decided in CERP3 that only Maintained school emissions would be included in DCC footprint and targets
- Academy schools would be included in Countywide emissions and targets

Data from all schools and academies



Maintained School Emissions Only in DCC Emissions Footprint

Breakdown of total CO₂e emissions 2022-23

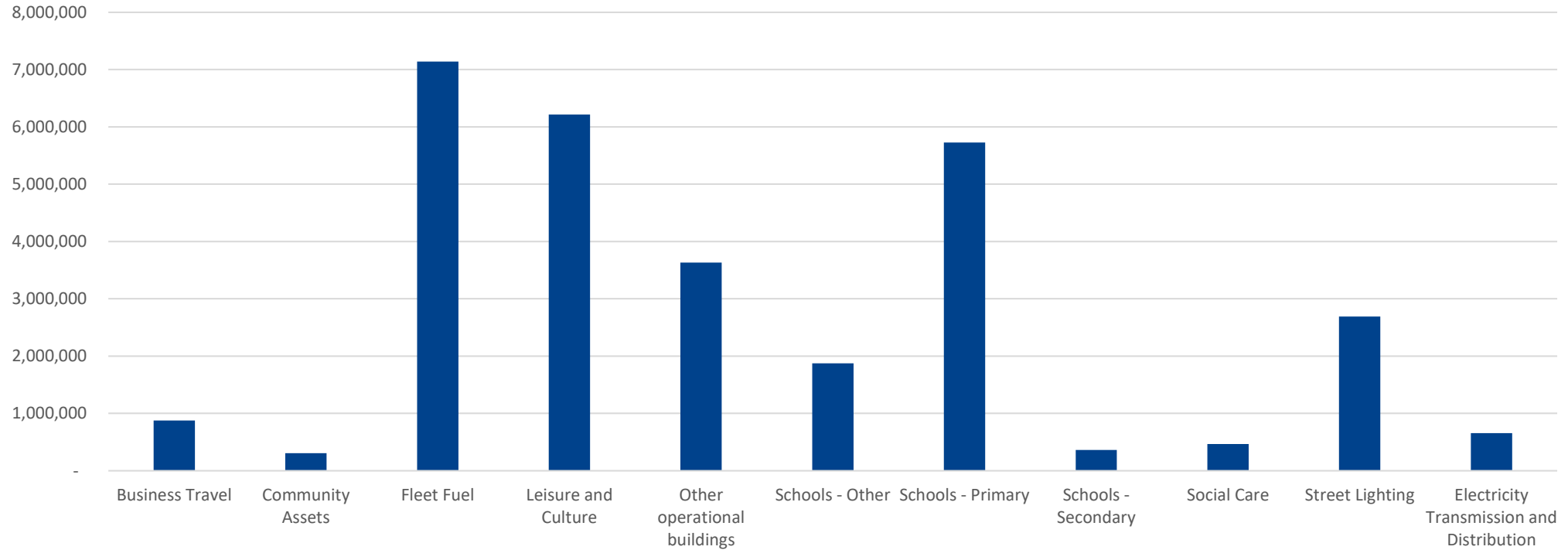


- Key differences:
- Small emissions % from only 2 secondary schools (at time of writing August 2024)
- Primary schools proportionately reduced but now most significant school sector
- Other schools includes Special schools – small in number but significant in terms of emissions



Carbon Emissions by department/area

Total kg Carbon 2022-23



Recalculated Schools Data:

Maintained Primary Schools: 5,727,149 Kg CO2

Secondary Schools (2no.): 361,287 Kg CO2

SEN Schools/ Other : 1,876, 273 Kg CO2

DCC Planned Emissions Reduction:

2022/23: 29,940,000 kg CO2e

2030 Target: 16,044,000 Kg CO2e

Future Planning

- Support will continue to be offered to all schools on the Energy SLA contract
- We will continue to adapt to changing circumstances/ price rises/ new energy contracts/ funding opportunities etc
- Maintained school carbon emissions are now a standing agenda item on the Net Zero Monitoring and Investment Group
- A separate sub group of key Officers has been established and meets bi-monthly to prioritize capital investment opportunities
- A tender will be released later this Autumn for the in-school support through ECO2 Smart Schools – the successful contractor will start from April 2025
- A Durham Climate Youth Summit is in early planning for 2025 for secondary age students (likely Yrs 8-10 and Y12)



Questions?

Rich Hurst
Education Advisor - Sustainability
Richard.hurst@durham.gov.uk



*... It is not easy
being green...*



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Children & Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 September 2024

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update



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

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update following the special meeting of Children and Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in January 2024. In addition to the update this report summarises the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) local area inspection of Durham which took place in June 2024 and the response to the inspection.

Executive summary

- 2 Around 1 in 6 of our children and young people in County Durham have a recognised additional need and rely on specialist support to help them with their needs and prepare them for adulthood. Our support regarding SEND covers from pre-birth up to a young person's 25th birthday.
- 3 To support Scrutiny this brief covering report is accompanied by a slide pack which covers key areas relating to SEND and has sought to capture particular areas of interest.
- 4 The accompanying slide pack at Appendix 2 covers:
 - (a) The Local Area SEND Inspection which took place between June 10th and June 28th 2024 - methods, areas of focus, outcome and next steps;
 - (b) Update on Education Health and Care needs assessment demand and the timeliness of issuing plans;
 - (c) Practice Spotlight – Early Years Speech Language and Communication and Peer Review;

(d) Upcoming steps for County Durham's SEND offer.

5 It is recognised that SEND covers many areas of support provided by a range of services across the local education, health and care system and has a number of inter-dependencies. Whilst the accompanying slide pack has sought to provide a comprehensive overview, it is recognised there may be areas members of scrutiny may wish to explore in more detail during the session or at subsequent meetings of the Committee. A range of links to local and national background papers which may be helpful to scrutiny members is also listed below to support preparations for the session.

Recommendation

6 Members are asked to note this report and use the content of the attached presentation and background papers to support discussions at the special session.

Background papers

- Special Children & Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Overview of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 25 January 2024 - Cover Report and presentation.

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) report to Special CYPOSC 25 January 2024](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Presentation to Special CYPOSC 25 January 2024](#)

- Area SEND inspection of Durham Local Area Partnership - Local Area Partnership report

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50255956>

- County Durham SEND strategy and children and young people's version

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/22438/Strategies-plans-policies-and-inspections>

- SEND inspection framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-framework-and-handbook>

- Cabinet report on High Needs Block December 2023
[High Needs Block Funding for SEND and Inclusion Support.pdf \(durham.gov.uk\)](#)
- Recent papers on High Needs Block to School Forum
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/schoolsforum>
- County Durham SEND local offer
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/localoffer>
- DfE SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan>

Author

Martyn Stenton

Tel: 03000 268 067

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Children and Families Act 2014 covers the SEND reforms and is accompanied by statutory guidance for organisations to follow through the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015).

Finance

There are a range of financial implications on education, health and care services. The presentation particularly highlights the current position and forecasts regarding the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant which is a key resource to support children and young people with additional needs.

Consultation and Engagement

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes clear that local authorities must ensure that children, young people, parents and carers are involved in decisions about local provision.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 details the requirement when taking decisions to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Climate Change

Through our SEND strategy we seek wherever possible to support children and young people to attend local schools and provision, rather than travel to provision which is further away or out of county.

Human Rights

None directly.

Crime and Disorder

A disproportionately high number of young people and children who commit crime and / or disorder have SEND. Through our programmes of work we aim to support children and young people with SEND in achieving their best outcomes in life. Early intervention and support for children and young people with SEND and inclusion needs, should have a positive impact on crime and disorder by helping to prevent offending and / or reoffending.

Staffing

A range of staff across education, health and care services support children and young people with their additional needs up to the age of 25.

Accommodation

None directly.

Risk

The presentation highlights a number of areas of risk and current mitigations. This includes risks regarding recent sustained increases in demand for additional EHCPs and capacity issues in the system along with risks regarding demand on resources and the forecast funding expected to be available in coming years.

Procurement

Commissioning and procurement implications are considered for each strand of work related to SEND and there is a multi-agency SEND commissioning group to support integrated commissioning activity.

Appendix 2: Overview of SEND

Presentation attached as a separate document.

County Durham SEND Overview

September 20th 2024



Introduction

- The Local Area SEND Inspection which took place between June 10th and June 28th 2024 - methods, areas of focus, outcome and next steps;
- Update on Education Health and Care needs assessment demand and the timeliness of issuing plans;
- Practice Spotlight – Early Years Speech Language and Communication and Peer Review;
- Future Focus;



Durham Area SEND Inspection

10th – 28th June 2024

Brief Overview

The inspection team is led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, and includes Children's Services Inspectors from the CQC, and education and social care inspectors from Ofsted.

The purpose of an Area SEND Inspection is to:

- provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
- where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements
- Documentation and Data collation and scrutiny (often referred to as Annex A)
- Multi Agency Audits, key documentation collation and tracking meetings for 6 selected children and young people – the tracking meetings firstly take place with the child, young person themselves and/or their families, then a separate meeting takes place with the key professionals involved with the child.
- Sampling/Topic-Based Meetings
- Sampling 'Visits' to relevant Teams and Services – in the Durham Area SEND Inspection these mostly took place as meetings as opposed to visits to the relevant workplaces.

Timeline of Activity

Week 1 (Offsite)

- Collation and sharing of Annex A documentation and data by the Partnership
- Inspectors scrutinise the Annex A information, select the 6 CYP for tracking and identify possible initial KLOEs
- Multi-agency audit activity and collation and QA of key documentation for the 6 selected CYP

Week 2 (Offsite)

- Virtual meetings with the 6 selected children and young people and/ or their parents/carers
- Some initial Sampling/Topic-Based virtual meetings

Week 3 (Onsite)

- In person tracking meetings with key professionals involved in the care/support/decision-making for the 6 selected CYP
- In person Sampling/Topic-Based meetings with the relevant service leads, managers and practitioners
- Sampling 'Visits' meetings with key teams/services
- Daily KIT meetings with the Core Team and the Lead Inspectors

Sampling/Topic-Based Meetings and Visits in Durham's Inspection

The inspectors had meetings with a range of relevant service leads, manager and practitioners across education health and care on key topics selected by them. These included:

- Durham Context and Local Area Partnership's Self Evaluation
- Durham's Parent Carer Forum
- SENDIASS
- CYP including at The Croft around Anxious About School Work and the eXtreme group
- Strategy and Commissioning
- EHCPs – Quality and Decision-Making
- Local Education Partnership Chairs, Virtual School and Alternative Provision
- Children's attendance, those missing or not attending, electively home educated and those on alternative packages of support
- Children with complex needs including those with a social worker, care leavers and those on the Dynamic Support Register
- Visits and discussions with family hubs, health teams, GPs, early years, primary, secondary, college and specialist school provision

During the Inspection, the inspectors met with:

- Over 30 children and young people, 10 parents/carers
- Over 110 DCC councillors, leaders, managers and officers (this includes staff in integrated commissioning)
- Around 95 NHS leaders, managers and practitioners (including ICB and staff from 5 NHS Foundation Trusts)
- Around 55 Heads, SENCOs and staff from schools, nurseries and colleges across Durham
- Other partners including MCT, HumanKind and Investing in Children
- Inspectors published a survey for practitioners, parents and carers, children and young people which we widely promoted. They received almost 1,500 responses in total which helped to shape the inspection findings.

Possible Outcomes

Following a full inspection, inspectors will report on the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The report will include:

- the inspection outcome
- what it is like to be a child or young person with SEND in the local area
- what the local area partnership is doing well and what needs to be improved
- recommendations for improvements that the local area partnership should act on
- whether any areas for priority action have been identified and which area partners are responsible for addressing them
- the likely type and timing of the next inspection activity

The three possible outcomes are:

The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to **positive experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to **inconsistent experiences and outcomes** for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to **significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes** of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

The Strengths Which the Inspection Team Recognised

- Collaborative leadership is strong across education, health and social care. Local Area Partnership (LAP) leaders prioritise SEND
- Children and young people feel valued, visible and included in their communities. They feel listened to by adults.
- Children and young people build transferable skills so that they can participate in wider activities
- There is improvement in the length of time taken to complete new assessments the result of the LAP recovery plan
- Most children and young people have their needs identified and met early (however there is an opportunity to do more for some young people who are permanently excluded)
- Young people with SEND have good attendance and this is improving further
- Persistent absence from school is reducing preparing young people well in education, training and employment
- Parents and carers state that their voice is mostly heard well and some have seen improvements to support and services as a result of this

Durham's Area Inspection Report Outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

We also received 4 areas for improvement:

- The local area partnership should intensify its work to further improve EHC plan quality and assessment timeliness. It should ensure that EHC plans consistently and accurately reflect the needs of children and young people. It should ensure all partner agencies contribute comprehensively with high-quality information, and that all plans detail children and young people's voice and needs, aspirations and next steps effectively.
- The local area partnership should continue to strengthen its work to further reduce the delays to access CAMHS and neurodevelopmental pathways across the age range of children and young people.
- The local area partnership should ensure that children and young people and their families can access easily identifiable needs-led services. Informed practitioners should direct families to services that provide support, guidance and intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- The local area partnership should further strengthen the monitoring and impact of strategic plans and policies to ensure that support and resources are consistently targeted to the children and young people and families that need it most.

Next Steps

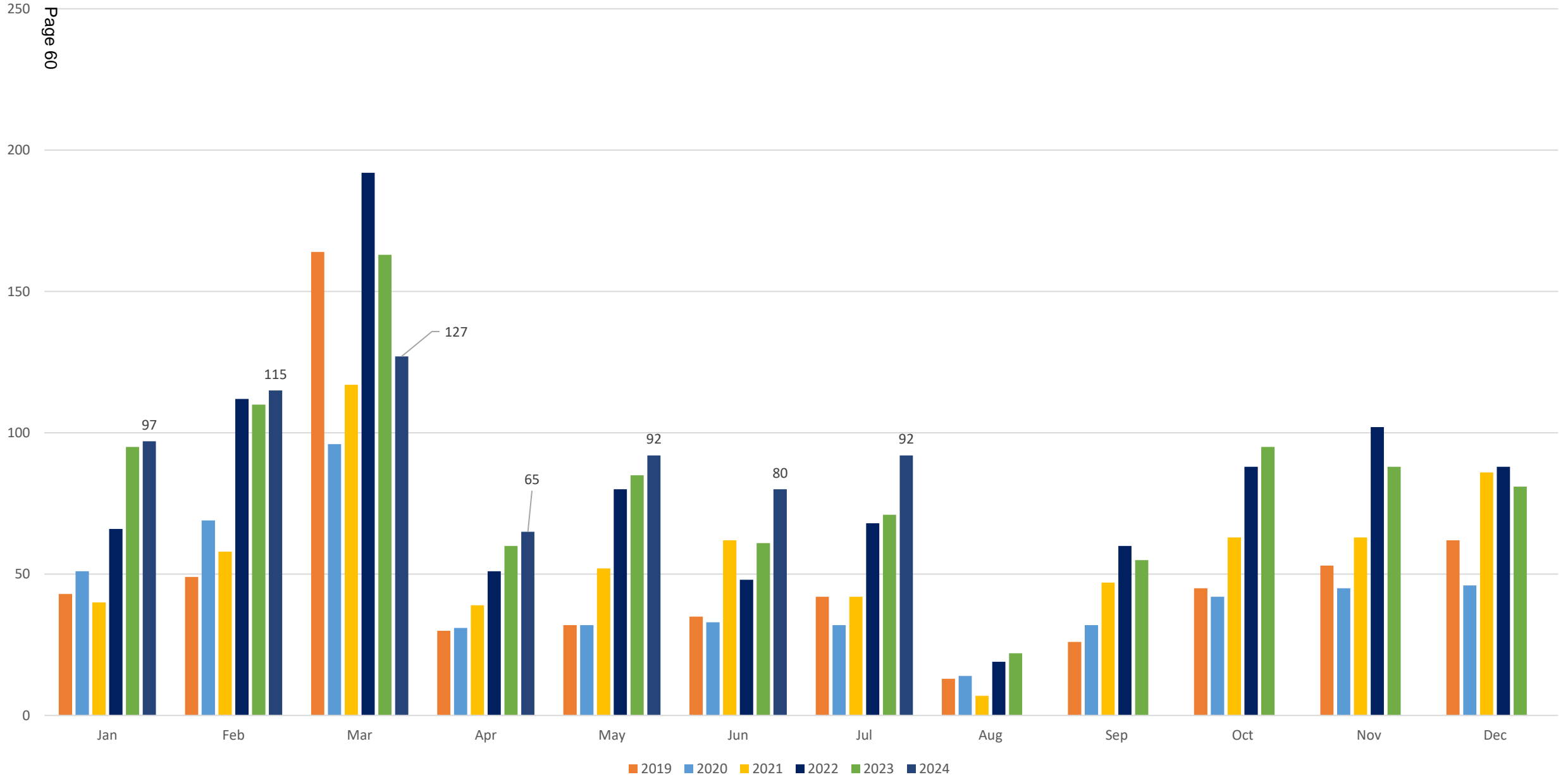
- We recognise the inspection findings and have done so previously in our work as a partnership through our self evaluation exercises. This gave the inspection team confidence when looking at our transformation work the inspection recognised the improvements being made and recommended a continuation of the work.
- Ofsted ask all local area partnerships to update and publish their strategic plans after a full inspection. The plan should include the actions it is taking, or will take, in response to the recommendations made in the inspection report. Local area partnerships may update existing plans or choose to produce new plans.
- We are currently working the required multi agency partnership plan and will submit this to Ofsted in October 2024.
- The SEND and AP Partnership will engage with all partners and stakeholder when deciding what actions we will take in response to the inspection report and will then update our strategic plan addressing the inspection recommendations .
- The Strategic Plans will be published in a way which ensures that it is accessible to children and young people with SEND, and their parents and carers.
- The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Education Health and Care Plans – Demand and Timeliness

Demand Headlines

- We have receive 668 requests in the year-to-date.
- This is higher than at this stage in 2023 (645) putting us on track for our highest yearly figure for requests and significantly higher than in 2019 (395).
- Most recently there have been 237 requests for Quarter 1 (April to June) have been higher than any year on record. This is an increase of 144% from 2019 (97 requests) and 15% (206 requests) from 2023

Requests for EHCP Assessment Received



Timeliness Headlines

- As we progress through historic EHC needs assessment and at the same time focus on improved performance we are issuing almost double the number of plans.
- From January to July we issued 644 at the same point in 2023 we had issued 339. Reflecting back to 2019 we had issued 156 plans at the same point in the year – showing the ongoing much higher demand than previously.
- Whilst we are issuing such a very high number of plans we are also beginning to recover performance on 20 week timeliness including through prioritising cases.
- In the latter part of 2023 members will recall we were not able to issue plans withing 20 weeks, during 2024 our performance is steadily improving month on month and in July 2024 we issued 18% of plans within 20 weeks. We anticipate this to continue to increase in coming months.

Practice Spotlight

Early Years Speech and Language Strategy 0-4 years

‘Little Voices Growing in County Durham’

Local Government Association Peer Support Challenge

Background

There is strong evidence to show that many children are not at an expected level of language development when they start school (approx. 50%). About 10% of those children will have long term severe or moderate speech and language needs, however research indicates that the remaining 40% of those children are more likely to be delayed with their language and that this may be linked to areas of deprivation

(‘Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication’, 2020, Public Health and DfE; ‘Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential’, 2017, DfE).

- ✓ The Family Hub programme has created an opportunity to focus on early years speech and language through the funded Home Learning Environment and Early Years Speech and Language elements of the programme, which have a remit to support children to develop their speech and language skills for the purpose of school readiness.
- In response to the needs of our children and the family hub programme, a strategy group was convened in September 2023 with representation from Local Area partners including NHS (midwifery, health visitors, speech and language therapy) and DCC (Early Help, SEND and Inclusion, Education Durham Early Years Team). This work is governed by the Best Start Partnership.

The Development of a Strategy

The strategy group have been using the 'Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication: Guidance to support local commissioners and service leads' (Public Health England and DfE, 2020) to support the process of developing the strategy and a robust integrated pathway

A comprehensive self evaluation has been carried out and 5 areas of focus agreed:

- ✓ Developing a shared partnership vision
- ✓ Targeting provision 'right time, right place'
- ✓ A universal, targeted and specialist support integrated pathway
- ✓ Early identification of need
- ✓ Leadership awareness

Local Government Association Peer Challenge

The LGA Peer Challenge helps local authorities to improve their systems for supporting the development of good speech, language and communication skills, and how we work together as a wider partnership to meet the speech, language and communication needs (SLCNs) of our children.

The support offered by the Peer Challenge will be tailored to suit Durham's strategy development.

The strategy group hope it can:

- Confirm that our self-evaluation has identified the right focus areas
- Raise awareness of the importance of early years speech and language across services and leadership
- Consider how we can work together within a complex context (for example we have 3 separate NHS trusts providing the health support)
- Help us better understand the impact of current support on children and their families
- Advise on the development of our integrated pathway and strategy

Longer term, the Peer Challenge will help us to develop a more robust strategy and support pathway to support our youngest children to thrive and achieve at school and throughout their lives.

LGA visit 17th – 20th September 2024

The LGA visit is designed to be supportive of the work that is being carried out and is not an inspection. They will be involved with a number of activities over the 4 days that they are in Durham. This will include:

- Meeting with strategic and corporate leaders
- Meeting with providers and practitioners
- Talking to families
- Visits to early years settings and family hubs
- Providing a presentation at the end of the week highlighting the strengths in Durham and advising on next steps for an action plan

The LGA will publish a report which will celebrate good practice in Durham.

Timeline

17th – 20th September
LGA peer challenge visit

Oct 2024
Develop action plan

December 2024
Draft strategy and pathway completed

Jan – March 2025
Governance and ratification of strategy at Health
and Wellbeing Board

Future Focus for SEND Work in Coming Months

- Respond to Ofsted and CQC SEND Inspection Report – Development of a Local Area Action Plan addressing the 4 priority areas
- Strategic focus on tackling development gaps in early language through implementation of Speech Language Communication pathways
- Intensify efforts to continue to manage demand for statutory assessment whilst improving timeliness and quality of EHCPs
- Strengthen partnership to reduce the time taken for young people on the neurodevelopment pathway
- Supporting children and young people with SEND and their families to access services that will best meet needs
- To increase the amount of Specialist Education opportunities both in Mainstream and Special Schools
- Despite our progress and engagement with DBV programme concerns about escalating overspends in coming years (local and national)
- Work with Hartlepool, Stockton and Gateshead as part of ‘Regional SEND change partnership’ and feed into DfE national developments
- Publish a new County Durham SEND Strategy (2025-2028) including a clear shared vision and partnership action plan

**Children and Young Peoples Overview
and Scrutiny Committee**

20 September 2024

**Home to School Transport Service –
Update**



Report of Corporate Management Team

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

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

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update in relation to the Home to School Transport Programme.

Executive summary

- 2 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide Home to School Transport to children and young people who meet circumstances prescribed in legislation. This is set out in statutory guidance from the Department for Education. Much has changed since the home to school transport legislation was first introduced in 1944 and the legislative framework has not been updated to reflect the realities of the 21st century.
- 3 The Home to School Transport offer for our eligible children and young people is currently set out in the Durham County Council "Home to Primary, Secondary and Special School and College Travel and Transport Policy.
- 4 The existing Home to School Transport (H2ST) service provides daily transport to over 9,000 children and young people, with over 1,200 contracts in place with Transport providers.

- 5 On 14 June 2023, following an external review and a detailed public consultation, Cabinet agreed to implement a programme to review and transform the Councils Home to School Transport arrangements.
- 6 The review is being undertaken in the context of increasing expenditure on statutory Home to School Transport. Net expenditure in 2023/24 was £28.65 million, which is £5.228 million more than in 2022/23. To meet forecast demand and cost pressures, the budget has been further increased in 2024/25 to £32.736 million. This is an increase of £3.550 million (circa 12%) from £29.186 million in 2023/24.
- 7 Transport costs are also forecasted to rise further in future years with continuing price inflation, increases in the National Minimum Wage and forecast increases in the number of young people with an Education Health and Care Plan requiring transport.
- 8 The Review work undertaken to date has progressed improvement work across a range of areas, including:
 - (a) A Review of the Maintained Concessionary Home to School Transport Scheme.
 - (b) Strengthened processes in relation to the provision of single person transport and passenger assistants.
 - (c) A renewed offer of a personal travel budget for parents/carers of pupils with SEND.
 - (d) Engagement with the Transport market to improve understanding of the Councils procurement arrangements and to improve competition for transport routes.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 CYP OSC is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the content of the report and presentation

Background

- 10 The Council has a statutory duty under various Acts and Statutory Guidance to provide free education transport to eligible students. The main legislation is set out in the following:
 - (a) The Education Act 1996;
 - (b) Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006;
 - (c) The Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014;
 - (d) Post 16 Transport to Education and Training Guidance 2014.
- 11 In order to comply with statutory Home to School Transport duties local authorities must undertake the following:
 - (a) Promote the use of sustainable travel and transport;
 - (b) Make transport arrangements for all eligible children.
- 12 In particular, the Education Act 1996, states that a statutory duty is placed on the Council to make suitable travel arrangements to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children of compulsory school age (five to 16 years). This is based on statutory walking distance for children to a qualifying school as follows:
 - (a) Beyond two miles (below the age of eight years);
 - (b) Beyond three miles (age eight to 16 years);
 - (c) Between two and six miles for pupils from low-income families (for example in receipt of free school meals);
 - (d) Pupils with a disability or mobility requirement.
- 13 The Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014 (Special Education Needs) requires Local Authorities to make transport arrangements for those children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility or associated health and safety issues related to their special education needs and disabilities.
- 14 However, much has changed since the home to school transport legislation was first introduced in 1944 and the legislative framework is now outdated and not fit for purpose to meet the needs of the 21st Century and the SEND system as it currently stands¹.

¹ Joint ADCS and ADEPT report in November 203 [ADCS_ADEPT_HTST_Paper_FINAL.pdf](#)

- 15 Durham County Council's Home to School Transport service provides daily transport to over 9,000 passengers. This is made up of mainstream and SEND passengers along with other special provision. This requires over 1,200 transport contracts to be in place which utilise over 300 different transport suppliers.
- 16 Expenditure on Home to School Transport has increased substantially due to demographic growth, inflationary pressures and prices. Over the five-year period since 2019/20, expenditure has doubled.

	2019/20 (£m)	2020/21 (£m)	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	2024/25 (£m)
Budget	11.308	14.731	16.482	19.576	29.186	32.736
Outturn	14.434	15.55	18.555	23.422	28.650	
Variance	3.126	0.819	2.073	3.846	-0.535	

- 17 Grant received from Government to support Home to School Transport services has not had a significant impact on the above expenditure increases. Councils receive the Extended Rights to Free Travel Grant, which supports with the costs of providing free transport for pupils on free school meals or where their parents are in receipt of working tax credit (outlined in the Legal implications in Appendix 1 to the report).
- 18 The grant has increased by £1.353 million, from £0.726 million in 2018/19 to £2.079 million in 2023/24. There is no other direct government support for the increasing costs of Home to School Transport and no funding received for SEN transport which accounts for approx. 70% of the budget
- 19 Transport costs are forecasted to rise further in future years with continuing price inflation and increases in the National Minimum Wage. In addition, Durham County Council's work on the DfE Delivering Better Value Programme identifies the potential for 1,500 more young people to have an EHCP by 2028 with a significant proportion of the young people requiring transport to school.
- 20 On 14 June 2023, following a detailed public consultation, Cabinet considered and agreed to a report which set out recommendations for implementing a programme to review and update the Council's Home to School Travel arrangements. The focus of the programme was as follows:
- (a) Review the provision of the Durham County Council's Concessionary Schemes.

- (b) Consider how the Council can more effectively and efficiently support the provision of journeys and passenger assistants on transport.
- (c) Promote independence skills of young people through travel training and other opportunities.
- (d) Introduce a simplified process for providing personal travel budgets for parents/carers of pupils with SEN and those living in remote rural areas where it is cost effective to do so.
- (e) Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County, especially schools with high volumes of routes.
- (f) Review potential procurement options for home to school transport services in relation to impact on value for money and associated competitive pricing.

21 This report provides a progress update in relation to the programme.

Review Durham County Council's Concessionary Scheme

22 There are three schemes which operate in County Durham:

- ***The standard (Spare Seat) scheme.*** When the Council commissions transport for statutorily entitled pupils there may be some spare seats available which are made available to non-entitled pupils. This practice is common across Local Authorities in England. The current charge is £2.00 per day;
- ***The maintained scheme.*** This was implemented following policy changes that took effect in September 2012, where transport capacity was maintained on some established school transport routes. There are 467 young people accessing this scheme, who attend nine schools, but who do not meet statutory eligibility criteria. As context, there are 65,932 pupils of statutory school age in the County. The Council does not operate a full cost recovery model for this scheme and incurs a financial cost each year of around £200,000. The current charge is £2.00 per day.
- ***The Schools' Scheme.*** Concessionary transport is also provided by some partner schools which the Council arranges on their behalf. There are currently 11 secondary schools participating covering travel by 2,110 children. Schools set their own charges for the provision. This scheme is cost neutral to the Council as it is fully funded by the participating schools.

- 23 At the meeting on the 14 June 2023, Cabinet agreed the following recommendation '*Agree in principle to phase out the Maintained Concessionary scheme subject to further appraisals of the options available to achieve this and their associated impact on stakeholders and Transport arrangements, with a further report to Cabinet on the findings and recommendations*'.
- 24 The review of the maintained concessionary scheme has delivered a detailed analysis of each route involved and considered a range of associated factors.
- 25 The findings of the Review were presented to Cabinet on 10th July 2024. Cabinet requested further work to be undertaken on the Review and brought back to a future meeting.

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

- 26 In the 2023 Home to School Transport Consultation, there was strong support (over 70%) that the Council should regularly review the type of home to school travel assistance it offers to meet the needs of children and ensure the most appropriate and cost-effective mode of transport is provided.
- 27 As a result, the Programme has looked at how we can enhance the way that we work with schools, parents and Council teams in making transport decisions about young people. In doing this, it has been important to ensure that where young people need single person transport and / or a passenger assistant that this continues to be provided. However, it is equally important that where young people are able to travel with their peers or on group transport that they should do this to help build up their social skills, confidence and independence.
- 28 The outcome of this work has seen the introduction of a strengthened decision making process in 2024 for new transport requests, which provides a more detailed review of a child's transport needs and is undertaken with input from schools, parents and relevant workers.

Promote independence skills of young people through travel training and other opportunities.

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

- 30 Many children with SEND currently receive door-to-door transport from the time they start school until the time they leave college and as such they do not gain the necessary travel and social skills that other children do. Whilst some children with SEN will not be able to travel independently, those that are able, should be given the opportunity to do so.
- 31 This aspect of the improvement programme is in the early stages of development, with options being researched and feedback received from other councils and local special schools who have experience of implementing schemes.
- 32 The findings and recommendations from this work will be considered by the Councils Home to School Transport Board in early 2025.

Introduce a simplified process for providing personal travel budgets for parents/carers of pupils with SEN and those living in remote rural areas where it is cost effective to do so.

- 33 A Personal Travel Budget is a sum of money provided by the Council to parents or carers of children who are eligible for travel assistance, where this is financially viable for the Council. The budget allows families to make their own arrangements for travel, thereby increasing choice and flexibility. It also provides an opportunity for the Council to reduce expenditure and administration time associated with day-to-day arrangements. Personal Travel Budgets would mainly be offered to SEN passengers who are in receipt of or will require single person transport.
- 34 The number of Personal Travel Budgets awarded by Durham County Council is significantly below the County Council average as identified in the 2021 review.
- 35 At the meeting on 14 June 2023, Cabinet agreed 'Review the existing Personal Travel Budget Scheme and promote this as a travel option to parents'.
- 36 In undertaking the review we have considered feedback from other Councils who were achieving higher rates of personal travel budgets. This identified that schemes with the highest take up had the following features:
- An Application process and criteria which were straightforward and easy to understand;
 - Active promotion of personal travel budgets to parents and

- Levels of payment awarded which reflect increasing costs and timely processes for making payments.

37 As a result, a number of changes were developed to simplify the Councils application process and ensure that a personal travel budget is considered/offered to Parents as a transport option in appropriate circumstances, and where it is financially viable for the Council.

38 The new Personal Travel Budget scheme is paid in advance and makes a differentiated payment level depending on the circumstances/needs of the young person involved. The new rates agreed are as follows:

Type of Need	Rate
Standard Rate: Children who are able to travel in a vehicle without the need for support or assistance	45p per mile
Enhanced Rate: Children who will require support or assistance to travel in a vehicle due to their needs	75p per mile

39 The payment of the 45p rate is the HMRC mileage allowance payment rate that organisations are allowed to pay without having to report it to HMRC.

40 The additional payment of 30p per mile at the higher 75p rate will be made where a young person has identified needs which will require additional support on a vehicle.

41 This is a positive development for parents. Whilst Personal Travel Budgets are voluntary, they will provide greater choice and flexibility for any parent/carer who wishes to take up the arrangement for their child's travel to school.

42 Based on feedback from other Local Authorities, the County Council do not have any evidence that the payment of an enhanced personal travel budget will incur an increased tax burden or impact on benefits, but individuals are asked to satisfy themselves that they meet HMRC's requirements.

Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County, especially schools with high volumes of routes.

43 The Council provides free transport for pupils travelling to their nearest suitable school, who would not otherwise qualify due to being under the relevant distance threshold, where the shortest walking route(s) are assessed as unsuitable to walk. A suitable route is one on which a

pupil, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school.

- 44 There is an opportunity to review some Unsafe routes within County Durham and assess whether these can be made safe through highways works, with associated costs, enabling children to safely walk to school, as well as providing wider benefits to the community such as helping to improve fitness and potentially contributing to reduced child obesity.
- 45 A specific work stream has been established to review unsafe routes and a preliminary list of potential unsafe routes to review has been identified. The findings of the work will be reported to the Councils Home to School Transport Board for discussion in 2025.
- 46 The Programme Team have also acquired journey planning software to undertake a pilot of routes to a small number of schools to assess whether any efficiencies can be achieved in current approaches to journey planning.

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

- 47 Due to challenges of increasing price inflation, contract costs, transport supply and market competition, it is pivotal to the delivery of the Service that the Council has a clear strategy and approach in relation to the procurement and supply of transport moving forward. This will involve assessing opportunities to develop the supply base further and increase competition and deliver better value on routes and contracts.
- 48 The Improvement Programme has introduced a number of initiatives in 2024 with the aim of improving our procurement process and aiming to strengthen the competition in the market for transport routes. These include:
 - Working with Transport Providers to ensure they have the skills and knowledge in order to bid effectively for contracted work.
 - Piloting an Inhouse Home to School Transport offer as an alternative to procuring solely from the market. The pilot will test the efficiency and effectiveness of Council directly providing transport for Young People on high cost school routes. The pilot will run until the middle of 2025, with the findings reported to the Councils Home to School Transport Board.
 - Enabling transport contracts to be published earlier to provide more time for providers to consider bids and so that parents have transport provision resolved as early as possible.

- Introduced new home to School Transport data dashboards to provide monitoring data across the Service.

Home to School Transport Policy

49 The County Council has also reviewed and updated its Home to School Transport Policy for 2024/25 to ensure it is aligned to recent changes in the DfE's statutory guidance, provides greater clarity to parents and reflects the changes to the Personal Travel Budget process and payment arrangements.

50 A summary of the main updates to the Policy are as follows:

- (a) The definition of Home to School Transport eligibility has been updated to make it clear that an EHCP does not automatically make someone entitled to transport assistance and that the council will not provide travel assistance for children attending a nursery setting or pre-school. This is the Council's current policy, and wording has been made clearer to parents and carers in the updated version.
- (b) A section to clarify requests for continuity of travel arrangements.
- (c) An update to the Appeals process to explain how requests for continuity of transport will be managed and that Stage 2 requires further evidence to be supplied.
- (d) A revised Personal Travel Budget section to reflect the new process and payment rates.
- (e) Clarification on the circumstances where we may suspend a young person's travel arrangements.

Conclusion

51 Home to School Transport is a statutory service for children and young people who meet government specified criteria. In June 2023, Cabinet agreed to establish a review programme to consider the provision of existing school transport services and to bring back proposals for consideration.

52 The themes and recommendations in this report reflect those areas of the programme covered agreed by Cabinet and the progress made.

Author

Keith Forster

Tel: 03000 267396

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

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

The EIA 2006 defines eligible children as follows:

Statutory walking distances eligibility

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

- Beyond two miles (if below the age of eight years); or
- Beyond three miles (if aged between eight and 16 years)

Special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility

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

Extended rights eligibility

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

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

Finance

The Consultation included proposals to introduce two payment rates for personal travel budget. A rate of 45p per mile (which is the HMRC rate) is proposed for children without additional need for support on transport. A higher rate of 75p per mile is proposed for those children with support needs on transport due to their SEN, Mobility or Disability.

The removal of the maintained concessionary routes would result in a financial saving of approx. £200,000 per annum as highlighted in paragraph 22.

Consultation

Consultation will take place with the small proportion of schools, parents and young people impacted by the changes to the maintained concessionary scheme.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

An equality impact assessment is attached to this report. The proposal to remove the maintained concessionary scheme is negative for those families (likely to be of working age) affected however current arrangements are potentially inequitable as it benefits a small number of schools, non-eligible pupils and parents. Mitigations are proposed, including an engagement plan with affected schools, stakeholders and parents and an implementation for the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. Proposed changes to travel budgets are positive as this will provide greater choice and flexibility for any parent/carer (likely to be of working age) who wishes to take up this arrangement in relation to their child's travel to school. This is also positive in terms of disability as budgets are typically offered to children with SEND.

Climate Change

The Review of the Concessionary scheme has considered any potential increase in the use of personal vehicles.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None

Procurement

None

Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Home to School Transport Update

20th September 2024

Purpose

- To update CYP OSC on the:
 - Background and Context
 - The Home to School Transport Programme Priority Areas
 - Progress made in each area
 - Next Steps

Baseline Numbers

- Currently 1,246 Home to School Transport Contracts
- Over 9,000 pupils receive transport services
- Over 300 hundred transport providers with a contract
- 378 pupils currently have Solo Transport
- Approx 500 pupils have a Passenger Assistant
- Pupils with SEND account for over 70% of expenditure.

National Context

- Joint paper in late 2023 from ADCS and ADEPT identified key issues as:
 - An outdated legislative framework underpinning home to school travel
 - An overemphasis on EHCPs to access support in the SEND reforms where choice of provision has an impact on distance travelled and cost.
 - Inflation and market pressures driving up costs further
 - The needs of children being transported are increasingly complex, which impacts cost.
 - Parental expectations have changed in recent years with an increase in the number of requests for individual transport.

Financial Context 2019/20 – 22/25

	2019/20 (£m)	2020/21 (£m)	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	2024/25 (£)
Budget	11.308	14.731	16.482	19.576	29.186	32.736
Outturn	14.434	15.55	18.555	23.422	28.650	
Variance	3.126	0.819	2.073	3.846	-0.535	

Durham's Response

- Undertook external review in 2021 which identified a range of potential changes to the Home to School Transport Service.
- In February 2023, Cabinet agreed to undertake public consultation on proposals
- Outcomes of the consultation reported to cabinet in June 2023.
- Cabinet agreed to progress a number of recommendations aimed at improving outcomes and efficiency of the Service.
- Corporate Home to School Travel Board and programme established under leadership of Corporate Director for CYPS.

The Home to School Transport Programme

- In June 2023, Cabinet agreed a programme to transform the Council's Home to School Travel arrangements. The focus of the programme was as follows:
 - (a) Review the provision of the Maintained Concessionary Schemes.
 - (b) Provide the most effective and cost-efficient transport.
 - (c) Promote independence skills of young people.
 - (d) Introduce a simplified process for providing personal travel budgets
 - (e) Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County.
 - (f) Review procurement options in relation to impact on value for money and competitive pricing.

Review the provision of the Maintained Concessionary Schemes.

Focus of the Work

- The maintained scheme provides subsidised transport to a small number of schools (9) and pupils (467) in the county. The Young People do not meet eligibility criteria. The Council incurs a financial cost each year of around £200,000 for operating the scheme.

Progress

- The review has delivered a detailed analysis of each route and considered a range of associated factors.
- The findings of the Review were presented to Cabinet on 10th July 2024.
- Cabinet requested further work to be undertaken and brought back to a future meeting.

Provide the most effective and cost-efficient transport.

Focus of the Work

- To ensure that young people who need solo transport and / or a passenger assistant continue to receive this.
- Where young people can travel with their peers/use group transport that they should do this to help build social skills, confidence & independence.

Progress

- Introduced a more robust decision-making process for new requests in 2024.
- This provides for a detailed review of a child's transport needs and is undertaken with input from schools, parents and relevant workers.
- Working with Special Schools to look at how we review existing transport provision for some Young People.

Promote independence skills of young people.

Focus of the Work

- To develop an Independent Travel Training scheme to support independence
- To look at the feasibility of Introducing Pickup Points where appropriate

Progress

- A project scope has been agreed by the Home to School Transport Board for developing options in relation to Independent Travel Training.
- A Workstream is in place to review schemes in other areas, discuss with relevant schools and families and assess the best options for Durham to consider.

Introduce a simplified process for providing personal travel budgets

Focus of the Work

- To develop an updated Personal Travel Budget Offer to parents of young people with SEND who require solo transport and where appropriate those in rural areas.
- Durham rate of PTBs was 50% of that achieved by other similar Councils.

Progress

- A new PTB offer has been agreed with Cabinet which increases the payment for children with additional needs to 75p per mile.
- The payment is made in advance to parents and success is monitored through school attendance levels.
- Parents made aware of offer when they apply for transport

Review unsafe walking routes and existing travel routes across the County

Focus of the Work

- Review unsafe routes to identify those where capital improvement can make the route safe
- Review transport journeys to schools with a high number of routes.

Progress

- A small number of unsafe routes have been identified which will be reviewed by the Project Team later this year.
- New IT software will be trialled in October 2024 to map current transport routes to a small number of schools to identify potential efficiencies in journey planning and to inform future deployment.

Review procurement options in relation to impact on VfM and competitive pricing

Focus of the Work

- To support the transport market to effectively utilise Durhams procurement framework
- To look at alternative options which can drive greater competition.

Progress

- Pre-engagement and training sessions held with transport providers.
- Earlier notification of transport routes available to providers
- Pilot in the use of 'In House' transport as an alternative to commercially provided
- Development of new data dashboards to monitor activity across the Home to School Transport Service.

Next Steps

- Continue to progress with the Programme of work outlined and in line with Cabinet decisions, including:
 - To promote and monitor the take-up and impact of Personal Travel Budgets
 - To develop options for an Independent Travel Training Scheme
 - To continue to work with Providers to increase competition and ensure providers are supported in Council procurement requirements.
 - To trial new IT software and the impact it can have on route planning.

Questions

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Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

20 September 2024



Children and Young People's Services – Final Outturn Revenue and Capital Outturn 2023/24

Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Purpose of the Report

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

Executive summary

- 2 The revenue outturn for 2023/24 was a cash limit overspend of £8.390 million for the year, representing circa 4.9% of the total net revenue budget for CYPS. This compares to a forecast cash limit overspend at quarter three of £8.104 million (4.7%).
- 3 The outturn takes into account net adjustments for sums outside the cash limit outturn such as redundancy costs which are met from corporate reserves, capital accounting entries and the use of / contributions to earmarked reserves. Inflationary adjustments in relation to energy reductions of £0.196 million, Fostering Allowance increases of £0.590 million and Pay Award budgets linked to vacancies of £0.283 million are also included in the net cash limit adjustments.
- 4 The outturn position includes overspends within Social Care of £10.670 million and underspends within Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £1.022 million, Education and Skills of £0.652 million, and Central of £0.604 million.
- 5 The council's financial procedure rules state that where a service groupings cash limit reserve is in deficit, the relevant service is required to make savings/ underspends the following year to bring the reserve back into balance. In this case, given the financial pressures and issues facing CYPS a further transfer from general reserves has been actioned this year end to retain the CYPS cash limit reserve at zero.

Recommendation(s)

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

Background

- 7 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.
- 8 The original Children and Young People's Services revenue budget has been revised to incorporate various permanent and temporary budget adjustments as summarised in the table below:

Description	Transfer	Transfer
Permanent	£m	£m
Q2 Transfer from AHS - Homefinder Team	£0.157	
Q3 Pay Award	£2.924	
Total Changes	£3.081	£0

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

Revenue Outturn

- 10 The revenue outturn position for CYPS is a cash limit overspend of £8.390 million for the year, representing a 4.9% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS. This compares the forecast quarter three cash limit overspend forecast of £8.104 million (4.7%).
- 11 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	Outturn	Variance	OCL Variance	Pay award/ Pension deficit	Inflation / Contingencies	Cash Limit Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Social Care	103.815	114.774	10.960	0.047	0.205	-0.542	10.670
EHIVC	6.322	3.778	-2.544	1.650	0.069	-0.197	-1.022
Education & Skills	41.536	5.190	-36.346	36.018	0.009	-0.333	-0.652
Operational Supp	2.505	1.516	-0.989	0.989	0	0	0
Central Charges	17.304	14.774	-2.530	1.926	0	0	-0.604
Excluded	0.049	0.049	0	0	0	0	0
Total	171.531	140.081	-31.450	40.630	0.283	-1.072	8.392

- 12 The outturn takes into account net adjustments for sums outside the cash limit outturn such as redundancy costs which are met from corporate reserves, capital accounting entries and the use of / contributions to earmarked reserves. Inflationary adjustments in relation to energy reductions of £0.196 million, Fostering Allowance increases of £0.590 million and Pay Award budgets linked to vacancies of £0.283 million are also included in the net cash limit adjustments.
- 13 Other costs outside the cash limit including central support, accommodation costs, capital entries and additional items funded via corporate contingencies have also been excluded.
- 14 The outturn position includes overspends within Social Care of £10.670 million and underspends within Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £1.022 million, Education and Skills of £0.652 million, and Central of £0.604 million.
- 15 Social Care is a net £10.670 million over budget for the year. The Service had a net overspend of £10.749 million relating to the cost of placements for children looked after (CLA), after taking account of costs of £0.394 million relating to higher rates for fostering allowances that were met corporately.
- 16 The pressure on the budget in children's social care has been evident for a number of years as the number of children in the care system has increased significantly and their needs have continued to become more complex. The budget for this area in 2023/24 was £62.288 million, which is an increase of £15.230 million on the previous year.

- 17 Across the year the number of CLA increased by 147 (14%) from 1,049 to 1,196 and the number of CLA in external high-cost placements (those costing more than £100,000 per annum) increased by 15 from 105 to 120. The average cost of External Residential placements has increased from £0.316 million at April 2023 to £0.332 million in March 2024.
- 18 The Education and Skills service had an underspend of £0.652 million in year. The main reasons for the underspend position are highlighted below:
- (a) The Home to School Transport (HTST) budget was increased by £9.6 million to £29.1 million in 2023/24 and an underspend of £0.536 million, or 1.8% was achieved against this revised budget;
 - (b) An overspend of £0.413 million relating to an aggregated budget shortfall across the service due to reductions in SLA income from schools;
 - (c) An overspend of £0.206 million relating to the write off of aged AWPU Pupil Transfer invoices. These invoices mainly relate to financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20. This overspend is offset by a reduction in the bad debt provision, which is reported under the Central CYPS budget heading;
 - (d) An overspend of £93,000 relating to DCC-run Nursery provision;
 - (e) An overspend of £66,000 relating to the operation of Durham Leadership Centre due to a shortfall in lettings income; and
 - (f) There is an underspend of £0.147 million against employee budgets, which results from a staffing restructure in Education Durham effective from September 2024 that was implemented in response to falling SLA income levels referenced in paragraph 98(b) above.
- 19 There are also further underspends in the following areas:
- (a) £0.270 million due to underspends on the Early Years Sustainability and associated activity budgets;
 - (b) £0.162 million Pension Liabilities saving;
 - (c) £0.160 million saving on the council contribution towards Maintained Nursery Schools.

- 20 There is no cash limit impact for the Progression and Learning Service after the net use of £3.158 million of reserves to fund the continuation of the service for January 2024 to March 2024, which is the period between European Social Funding (ESF) ending on 31 December 2023 and UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) beginning in April 2024.
- 21 There was an underspend of £0.604 million against budget in the Central CYPS budgets resulting from a change in debt provision for the year. This is a one-off impact in the current financial year and reflects that relatively high levels of debts over four years old have been written off this year, thus reducing the bad debt provision requirement.
- 22 Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children had an underspend of £1.022 million, relating to:
- (a) The One Point Service had an underspend of £0.591 million, largely attributable to underspends in employee and activity budgets due to the management of vacant posts in advance of delivering MTFP savings of circa £0.300 million in 2024/25.
 - (b) SEND and Inclusion are reporting a £0.268 million underspend after the application of £0.200 million funding from contingencies provided to tackle the backlog of statutory assessments 2023/24. This underspend is largely attributable to underspends in employee budgets due to the management of vacant posts and recruitment delays.
 - (c) Aycliffe Secure Centre (ASC) is reporting a nil cash limit variance after a contribution to reserves of £679,000. The forecast at quarter three was a contribution of £70,000 and the change is largely attributable to recruitment delays and savings on premises expenditure.
 - (d) The remaining service areas in EHIVC are reporting an overspend of £0.163 million.
- 23 Operational Support is reporting a nil variance against budget.
- 24 A net £7.565 million relating to contributions to and from reserves are also included in the net adjustments for sums outside the cash limit and therefore excluded from the service outturn. The major items being:
- (a) £3.544 million drawdown from Schools Reserves to write off School deficits as part of the academy transfer process;
 - (b) £0.927 million drawdown from the Corporate ER/VR reserve to fund Schools and Progression and Learning redundancies as the service is restructured to meet UKSPF grant funding levels;

- (c) £0.921 million drawdown from the Adult Learning reserve being the use of grant carried forward from the previous year;
- (d) £0.823 million contribution to the PFI Lifecycle reserve relating to estimates of replacement of furniture and equipment;
- (e) £0.725 million drawdown from Progression and Learning Reserves to fund the impact of ESF grant funding reductions from quarter four, with new UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant allocations not being receivable until April 2024;
- (f) £0.679 million contribution to Aycliffe Secure Services reserve to fund future projects at the centre;
- (g) £0.533 million drawdown from the Multiply Funding reserve to fund service delivery;
- (h) £0.490 million drawdown from the Homes for Ukraine reserve to fund service delivery;
- (i) £0.428 million contribution to the Supporting Families Programme reserve to fund the programme in future years;
- (j) £0.472 million drawdown from the Family Hubs Programme reserve to fund service delivery;
- (k) £0.314 million drawdown from the Emotional Wellbeing reserve to fund service developments;
- (l) £0.314 million drawdown from the Youth Futures reserve to fund service delivery;
- (m) £0.287 million drawdown from the Children's Social Inclusion reserve to fund the Holiday Activities and Food Programme;
- (n) £0.285 million drawdown from the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children reserve to fund service delivery;
- (o) £0.248 million drawdown from the Durham Enable reserve to fund service delivery;
- (p) £0.240 million contribution to the Delivering Better Value reserve to fund future service delivery;
- (q) £0.238 million drawdown from the Rapid Response reserve to fund the service; and

- (r) £0.236 million drawdown from the Music Service reserve to fund service delivery;
- 25 Taking the year end outturn position into account, there is a £8.392 million deficit cash limit position at year end. As the service has no cash limit reserves this overspend is funded from general reserves.
- 26 The council's financial procedure rules state that where a service groupings cash limit reserve is in deficit, the relevant service is required to make savings/ underspends the following year to bring the reserve back into balance. In this case, given the financial pressures and issues facing CYPS a further transfer from general reserves has been actioned this year end to retain the CYPS cash limit reserve at zero.

Dedicated Schools Grant and Schools

- 27 The council currently maintains 145 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.
- 28 The council had 161 maintained schools at the time of the 2023/24 budget setting and 16 schools have converted to academy status since that point.
- 29 The table below shows the schools that have converted to academy status within the year, the balance of reserves at 1 April 2023 and final balance transferred for schools who have been finalised.
- 30 In the case of Wellfield School, the Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 15 March 2023 to write-off the deficit using the earmarked reserve established for this purpose.

Reserves at 1 April 2023 (-/-) surplus)	School	Balance Written off via Earmarked Reserve	Balance Transferred ((-) surplus)
£ Million		£ Million	£ Million
2.776	Wellfield School	2.992	-
-0.382	Vane Road Primary	-	-0.408
-0.123	Collierley Primary	-	-0.132
-0.077	Woodham Burn Primary	-	-0.125
-0.037	Easington C of E Primary	-	-0.035
-0.070	Green lane C of E Primary	-	-0.114
-0.710	Greenfield School	-	-0.595
-0.113	St Helens Auckland Primary	-	-
-5.118	Durham Sixth Form Centre	-	-5.512
0.059	Peases West Primary	-	-
-0.018	Castleside Primary	-	-
-0.145	Pelton Community Primary	-	-
-0.038	Beamish Primary	-	-
-0.423	Catchgate Primary	-	-
0.013	Deaf Hill Primary	-	-
-0.047	Kelloe Primary	-	-
-4.453	Net change due to academisation	2.992	-6.921

- 31 Should Peases West Primary and Deaf Hill Primary schools still have deficit reserve balances following the finalisation of balances, the academy trust will be invoiced for such balances.
- 32 The total amount of reserves movement relating to academisation within the year was £4.077 million, this included balances of £0.148 million for schools which converted in quarter four of 2022/23.
- 33 The reserve position for the 145 maintained schools at final outturn is shown in the following revenue outturn table:

Subjective Budget Heading	Original Budget	Final Outturn	Outturn to Budget Variance
	£ Million	£ Million	£ Million
Employees	193.907	196.750	2.843
Premises	14.448	14.907	0.459
Transport	1.789	2.374	0.585
Supplies	33.046	34.418	1.372
Central Support & DRF	0.060	0.211	0.151
Gross expenditure	243.250	248.660	5.410
Income	-58.814	-73.760	-14.946
Net expenditure	184.436	174.900	-9.536
Budget share	176.643	177.802	0.752
Use of reserves	7.793	-2.902	-10.695
Balance at 31 March 2023	-23.770	-23.770	-
Balance at 31 March 2024	-15.977	-26.672	-10.695
Balance for academies not yet transferred	-	-0.559	-0.559
Revised Balance at 31 March 2024	-15.977	-27.231	-11.254

- 34 The final position has improved since budget setting when it was forecast that the 145 schools would need to use £7.793 million of reserves. The final outturn shows that the schools will contribute £2.902 million to reserves.
- 35 The change in the position largely relates to an increase in income at final outturn compared to previous forecasts. The following table shows the main areas of income which has increased to improve the final position of the schools.

Income	£ Million
Additional Government Grant	3.200
Fees and Charges	2.600
External Concs/Services to other schools	2.300
Staff Insurance Claims	1.800
Early Years Funding	1.700
SEN Funding	1.600
Interest payable on reserves	1.200

- 36 The reserve position reflects 99 schools (68%) contributed £5.782 million to their reserves and 46 schools (32%) utilised £2.880 million of their reserves to balance their in-year financial position.
- 37 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 had significant flexibility about how to use this funding and sums ranging between £2,000 and £85,000 were provided to 23 schools to support them in moving to a more sustainable financial position.
- 38 This grant allocation has positively impacted on the need for schools to request a licensed deficit in 2024/25, however whilst this is welcomed as the grant allocation is one-off and therefore will not be available next year there is a strong likelihood that some schools will require licensed deficits in 2025/26.
- 39 A separate paper on the July Cabinet agenda sets out an overview of the maintained schools budget plans for 2024/25.

Dedicated Schools Grant Centrally Retained Block

- 40 The outturn position for the centrally retained DSG budgets is an overspend of £1.196 million as detailed below:

DSG Block	Budget £ Million	Outturn £ Million	Variance £ Million
High Needs	89.917	91.877	1.96
Early Years	34.271	33.837	-0.434
Central Schools Services	2.898	2.347	-0.551
De-delegated	0.201	0.422	0.221
TOTAL	127.287	128.483	1.196

- 41 For the High Needs Block (HNB), the budget at the start of the year included a planning assumption of a £1 million underspend that would result in a reduction to the cumulative HNB deficit position.
- 42 The outturn position is an overspend against grant allocation by £1.960 million (forecast overspend of £2.391 million at quarter three), therefore increasing the HNB cumulative deficit from £8.635 million to £10.595 million.

- 43 The main area of pressure is top up funding in mainstream schools and settings, where expenditure on mainstream top up funding was £19.135 million against a budget of £16.739 million, thus resulting in an overspend of £2.396 million (14%) against budget.
- 44 There are circa 27% more full time equivalent pupils receiving top up funding in 2023/24 in comparison to the previous year. Whilst the average cost of individual top up funding allocations is broadly similar to last year, this still results in a significant overspend position.
- 45 The other main areas of pressure are in Independent and Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) provision, where expenditure of £9.126 million exceeded budget of £7.214 million by £1.912 million, and in Alternative Provision (AP) where net expenditure of £10.552 million against a net budget of £10.354 million, results in an overspend of £0.198 million. Much of this is due to increased numbers of excluded pupils moving the Pupil Referral Unit at The Woodlands School during the autumn and spring terms.
- 46 An updated HNB Sustainability Plan was reported to Cabinet in December 2023. The report set out the implications of lower increases to HNB grant over the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 than received in recent years, set against continuing increases in cost and demand and resulting in a forecast increasing cumulative deficit position that could reach £67 million by the end of 2027/28.
- 47 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 and hold this cumulative deficit in an unusable reserve on the Balance Sheet, is due to end in on 31 March 2026. After this point, the HNB deficit may need to be funded by council resources from 2026/27.
- 48 Phase one of the HNB Sustainability Programme came to an end in the summer of 2023, which focussed on nine key areas as agreed by Cabinet in 2019.
- 49 Phase two of our HNB Sustainability Programme commenced in September 2023, with a major element 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.

50 The Early Years Block expenditure of £34.196 million was £0.434 million lower than the grant allocation, however we await the final grant adjustment in July 2024 (based on January 2023 pupil numbers), which is likely to result in a clawback of funding.

51 The impact of the outturn on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table:

DSG Reserves	High Needs Block £ Million	Early Years Block £ Million	Schools Block £ Million	Total DSG £ Million
Balance as at 1 April 2022	-8.843	0.656	2.401	-5.786
2021/22 Early Years Block Adjustment	-	0.594	-	0.594
Use/ Contribution in 2022/23	0.208	-0.528	-1.620	-1.940
Balance as at 31 March 2023	-8.635	0.722	0.781	-7.132
2022/23 Early Years Block Adjustment	-	-0.359	-	-0.359
Use / Contribution in 2023/24	-1.960	0.434	0.330	-1.196
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-10.595	0.797	1.111	-8.687

52 The overall DSG reserve was in deficit 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 £8.687 million to the year end, however this is prior to any clawback of EY funding.

53 The in-year increase in the Schools Block Reserve largely reflects the timing of a payment of £0.582 million in relation to copyright licenses from the Central School Services Block, offset by a planned use of the de-delegated reserves of £0.221 million.

54 The balance of £1.111 million on the Schools Block reserve is held to support in-year movements in relation to school funding formula and potential PFI costs in relation to schools funded by PFI, pending a change in the application of funding formula guidance which is currently under review.

Capital Programme

- 55 The capital programme has been revised to take into account budget reprofiled from the previous financial year following the final accounts for that year and to take account of any revisions in the current year.
- 56 The revised budget is presented at Appendix 3 together with actual expenditure.

Author(s)

David Watchman, Finance Manager

Tel: 03000 268573

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no implications associated with this report.

Finance

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

Consultation

There are no implications associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications associated with this report.

Climate Change

There are no implications associated with this report.

Human Rights

There are no implications associated with this report.

Crime and Disorder

There are no implications associated with this report.

Staffing

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

Accommodation

There are no implications associated with this report.

Risk

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

Procurement

There are no implications associated with this report

Appendix 2: CYPS final outturn by subjective analysis

Budget Heading	Revised Annual Budget	Outturn	Variance	OCL Variance	Pay Award / Pension Deficit	Inflation / Contingencies	Cash Limit Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Employees	97.507	93.177	-4.330	0.012	0.283	-0.208	-4.243
Premises	5.479	6.367	0.888	-0.600	0	-0.219	0.069
Transport	36.742	36.681	-0.061	0	0	0	-0.061
Supplies and Services	12.17	22.593	10.423	0.00	0	-0.207	10.216
Third Party Payments	64.631	79.792	15.161	0	0	-0.590	14.571
Transfer Payments	3.728	5.735	2.007	0	0	0	2.007
Capital	13.962	2.837	-11.125	11.125	0	0	0
Central Support	28.764	22.688	-6.076	1.830	0	0	-4.246
DRF	0	0.052	0.052	0	0	0	0.052
Sub-total expenditure	262.983	269.922	6.939	12.367	0.283	-1.224	18.365
Grant	-32.568	-38.239	-5.671	0	0	0	-5.671
Contributions Summary	-4.668	-4.137	0.531	0	0	0	0.531
Sales Summary	-0.053	-0.031	0.022	0	0	0	0.022
Charges	-18.877	-20.788	-1.911	0	0	0	-1.911
Rents	-0.314	-0.441	-0.127	0	0	0.152	0.025
Recharges	-34.948	-36.536	-1.588	0	0	0.001	-1.587
Other Income Summary	-0.023	-1.405	-1.382	0	0	0	-1.382
Capital	0	-23.676	-23.676	23.676	0	0	0
Sub-total income	-91.451	-125.253	-33.802	23.676	0	0.153	-9.973
Net Total	171.532	144.669	-26.863	36.043	0.283	-1.071	8.392

**potential rounding differences between this table and the summary table by Head of Service*

Appendix 3: CYPS Capital final outturn

Head of Service	2023/24 Actual £	2023/24 Budget £	Future Years Budget £
Social Care	2,213,396	2,213,396	5,141,452
EHIVC	267,586	267,586	21,047,739
Education-School Devolved Capital	4,092,461	4,092,461	5,244,321
Education-School Related	35,321,640	35,321,640	89,983,992
EHIVC-Secure Services	306,236	306,236	196,309
Planning & Service Strategy	470,718	470,718	197,854
Total	42,672,036	42,672,036	121,811,667

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Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny

20 September 2024



Children and Young People's Services – Quarter 1: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2024/25

Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide details of the forecast outturn position for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget for the year, based on the position at the end of June 2024.

Executive summary

- 2 The 2024/25 projected outturn for CYPS, based upon the position to 30 June 2024 is a cash limit overspend of £7.609 million, representing a 4% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS.
- 3 The cash limit outturn projection excludes forecast use of contributions to earmarked reserves.
- 4 Forecast net reductions in energy costs (£0.107 million) have been excluded from the cash limit outturn position. Also funded corporately is £0.960 million of expenditure in EHIVC relating to additional costs being incurred to tackle the backlog of Education, Health and Care Plans assessments and £0.370 million of expenditure relating to external consultancy support to review Children Looked After forecasts and a review of the Councils Sufficiency Strategy and mitigation measures to address these pressures.
- 5 In addition, £0.320 million expenditure on surplus school sites and £0.302 million relating to backdated Community Homes Allowance payments to staff at Aycliffe Secure Centre are excluded and have been funded via corporate contingencies.
- 6 The forecast outturn position includes overspends within Social Care of £7.823 million and underspends within Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.167 million, Education and Skills of £34,000, and Operational Support of £19,000.

- 7 Details of the reasons for under and overspending against relevant budget heads are disclosed in the report.
- 8 The service capital budget 2024/25 is £98.204 million with expenditure of £13.362 million as at the end June 2024.

Recommendation(s)

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

Background

- 10 The County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2024/25 at its meeting on 28 February 2024. 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 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	OCL / Inflation Pressures / Contingencies £m	Cash Limit Variance £m
Head of Social Care	117.420	125.585	8.165	-0.342	7.823
EHIVC	6.239	7.263	1.024	-1.191	-0.167
Education and Skills	45.187	45.472	0.285	-0.319	-0.034
Operational Support	0.734	0.715	-0.019	0	-0.019
Central Charges	18.040	18.001	-0.039	0.045	0.006
HoSC Excluded	0.049	0.049	0	0	0
Total	187.669	197.085	9.416	-1.807	7.609

- 12 The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2024/25 and show:
- the approved annual budget;
 - the actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
 - the variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
 - 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

- 13 The 2024/25 projected outturn for CYPS, based upon the position to 30 June 2024 is a cash limit overspend of £7.609 million, representing a 4% overspend against the total revised budget for CYPS.

- 14 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).
- 15 The forecast outturn position includes overspends within Social Care of £7.823 million and underspends within Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children of £0.167 million, Education and Skills of £34,000, and Operational Support of £19,000. Further details are provided below:
- (a) Children's Social Care is forecast to be a net £7.823 million over budget for the year, with the Service forecasting a net overspend of £6.033 million relating to the cost of placements for children looked after;
 - (b) The pressure on the budget in Children's Social Care has been evident for several years as the number of children in the care system has increased significantly and their needs have continued to become more complex. The budget for this area in 2024/25 is £76.574 million, which is an increase of £14.674 million on the previous year.
 - (c) The quarter one forecast reflects the continuing upward trend for CLA numbers between now and March 2025, and that there will also be an increased need for more expensive residential placement options (current average cost of an external residential placement is £0.351 million per annum). However, some of this demand for residential placements can be managed through an expanded in-house residential provision, meaning numbers in high-cost external residential provision will remain at current levels.
 - (d) The forecast overspend factors in the need to use ten expensive unregistered placements at an average cost of £0.686 million per placement per annum.
 - (e) The forecast overspend is also driven by ongoing challenges in recruiting enough in-house foster carers and having to place an increased reliance on more expensive Independent Fostering Agency placements.

- (f) In order to provide independent scrutiny of the forecasts developed for the MTFP(15) report, the council has engaged Newton Europe , an external consultancy and data analyst to validate the various assumptions and test against national and regional trends. They are also reviewing the CLA Sufficiency Strategy and will make recommendations on options the council should consider in tackling this issue. The outcome of this work will be considered in the MTFP(15) report to Cabinet in December 2024.
- (g) Other areas of the Social Care budget are forecast to overspend by a net £1.790 million, largely reflecting associated pressures linked to increased CLA numbers, including legal and professional expenses, supporting family time services and independent visitors. These pressures, together with the updated forecasts of CLA placement budget pressures, have been recognised as part of the MTFP planning process and budgets will be increased accordingly for the 2025/26 financial year.
- (h) Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children is forecasting an underspend of £0.167 million after adjusting for inflation pressures to be funded corporately. This underspend is mainly attributable to underspends in employee and activity budgets in the One Point and SEND service areas.
- (i) Expenditure of £0.960 million is included in the forecasts relating to additional resources to tackle the backlog of EHCP requests. These costs fall largely in Educational Psychology and SEND Casework teams and associated corporate funding is also included, so there is a net nil impact from this on the service position. These ongoing pressures have been reflected in the MTFP(15) budget estimates so that the base budget can be uplifted to reflect this ongoing need.
- (j) Aycliffe Secure Centre is currently forecast to be in line with budget, although the medium-term plan indicates surpluses will be generated from this service. Occupancy rates are currently lower than planning assumptions at this stage, however, it has been anticipated that these will increase later in the year.
- (k) The Education Service is reporting a broadly breakeven position after taking account adjustments for inflationary pressures and estimated pay awards. Within Education there a number of over and underspends as follows:

- i. A forecast overspend of £0.500 million reflecting the anticipated shortfall against income budgets of £4.8 million for service level agreements with schools. This reflects a continuing financial pressure for the service largely because of schools converting to academy status;
 - ii. A forecast overspend of £0.143 million relating to DCC run nursery provision across four settings.
 - (l) These overspends are offset by the following underspends:
 - i. £0.425 million due to underspends in the Early Years team relating to nursery outreach, sustainability and activity budgets.
 - ii. £0.190 million against employee budgets, largely because of a staffing restructure in Education Durham and School Places and Admissions, to be implemented this summer.
 - iii. £0.159 million of underspends across the service against employee budgets.
 - (m) The Home to School Transport budget was increased by £3.550 million in 2024/25, from £29.186 million in 2023/24 to £32.736 million in 2024/25. It is currently forecast that Home to School Transport expenditure will be in line with budget, however at the time the quarter one forecasts were prepared, a significant part of the tendering process for contracts for the 2024/25 academic year was in progress and the outcome of this will largely determine the position against budget.
 - (n) An updated forecast will be presented in the quarter two report to Cabinet in November, with work underway to forecast demand and cost pressures across the MTFP(15) planning period.
- 16 The forecast cash limit outturn shows the position after a net £2.856 million transfer / drawdown from reserves, the major items being:
- (a) £0.899 million drawdown from Progression and Learning Reserves to fund various NEET and employment support initiatives in year;
 - (b) £0.445 million drawdown from the Corporate ERVR reserve to fund Schools and Music Service forecasted redundancies;
 - (c) £0.400 million drawdown from the Emotional Wellbeing reserve to fund service developments; and

- (d) £0.221 million drawdown from the Integrated Rapid Response reserve to fund the service;
- 17 No budget transfers have been actioned in the first quarter.
- 18 Taking the forecast outturn position into account, there is a £7.609 million forecast overspend / deficit to 31 March 2025. This will, as in previous years, need to be funded corporately from the General Reserve due to the fact this Service has exhausted its cash limit reserves in previous years.

Dedicated Schools Grant

Schools Block

- 19 The council currently maintains 143 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 forecast position for these maintained schools at quarter one is shown in the table below:

Subjective Budget Heading	Original Budget £million	Quarter 1 Forecast £million	Forecast to Budget Variance £million
Employees	203.112	208.625	5.513
Premises	14.054	14.516	0.462
Transport	3.066	4.188	1.122
Supplies	34.018	35.887	1.869
Central Support & DRF	0.162	0.203	0.041
Gross expenditure	254.412	263.419	9.007
Income	-63.785	-69.418	-5.633
Net expenditure	190.627	194.001	3.374
School funding allocation	186.178	188.543	2.365
Use of reserves	4.449	5.458	1.009
Balance at 31 March 2024	26.192	26.192	-
Balance at 31 March 2025	21.744	20.735	-1.009

- 21 At quarter one, maintained schools are forecasting the use of £5.458 million of reserves to balance the in-year financial position. The required use of reserves has increased by £1.009 million from the initial planned use of reserves which were assumed for budget setting purposes.

- 22 The main reason for this is the proposed flat rate pay award of £1,290 for non-teaching staff, which if agreed, would be higher than the sums included within budgets where a planning assumption of a 4% increase was made. The proposed flat rate award would equate to an increase in non-teaching pay related costs above 5% for many schools.
- 23 On 29 July 2024 the Chancellor of the exchequer announced that the Government were minded to accept the Pay Review body recommendations for a 5.5% pay award to teachers and committed to fully funding the impact. The Trade Unions are yet to agree this and will be putting this to their members over the coming weeks. The impact of this pay award and additional funding will be factored into the quarter 2 forecast.
- 24 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 2025/26.
- 25 The council will work closely with schools over autumn term to support the financial planning process to set balanced budgets for 2025/26.

Centrally Retained Blocks

- 26 The forecast outturn position for the centrally retained DSG budgets shows a projected overspend of £7.873 million, as detailed below:

DSG Block	Budget £ million	Outturn £ million	Over / (Under) Spend £ million
High Needs	89.882	97.755	7.873
Early Years	54.318	54.318	-
Central Schools Services	3.319	3.319	-
TOTAL	147.519	155.392	7.873

- 27 The High Needs Block (HNB) budget for 2024/25 was set with a planned forecast deficit of £6.547 million, due to the significant recognised gaps between high needs funding levels and demand for high need educational placements and additional financial top-up funding to schools to manage such demand.

- 28 The quarter one forecast indicates that the overspend will be £7.873 million, £1.326 million higher, reflecting pressures across most areas of the HNB budget as demand continues to increase. The position at quarter two will include an early assessment of the impact of pupils needs in the 2024/25 academic year, which could increase pressure further on this budget.
- 29 An updated HNB Sustainability Plan was reported to Cabinet in December 2023. This report set out the implications of lower increases to HNB grant over the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 than have been received 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.
- 30 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, from which point thereafter, the cumulative HNB deficit would need to be funded by Council revenue reserves.
- 31 Phase one of the HNB Sustainability Programme which came to an end in the summer of 2023, focussed on nine key areas as agreed by Cabinet in 2019 and reported previously.
- 32 Phase two of our 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.
- 33 Planning is currently underway for engagement with all schools and settings in Durham in the first term of the new academic year to consider all areas of expenditure across the high needs block to determine where it may be possible to make savings and / or prioritise spending. However, despite all this work, it is becoming increasingly clear that without additional central government funding, there will be recurring overspends for High Needs Education Services due to continued increased demand.
- 34 For the Early Years Block, indications are that there is likely to be an underspend against grant allocation, however it is difficult to predict as the new entitlements are rolled out during the year.
- 35 The impact of the current forecast on the DSG reserves position is shown in the following table:

DSG Reserves	High Needs Block £million	Early Years Block £million	Schools Block £million	Total £million
Balance as at 1 April 2023	-8.635	0.722	0.781	-7.132
2022/23 Early Years Block Adj	-	-0.359	-	-0.359
Use - / Contribution in 2023/24	-1.960	0.434	0.330	-1.196
Balance as at 1 April 2024	-10.595	0.797	1.111	-8.687
2023/24 Early Years Block Adj	-	-	-	-
Forecast Use - / Contribution	-7.873	-	-	-7.873
Forecast Balance at 31 March 2025	-18.468	0.797	1.111	-16.560

36 The overall DSG reserve was in a deficit of £8.687 million at the start of the financial year, largely because of the accumulated deficit position of £10.595 million in relation to the high needs block. The overall deficit position is now forecast to increase to £16.560 million to the year end, however this is prior to any clawback of Early Years funding that is anticipated.

37 The HNB cumulative deficit is forecast to increase to £18.468 million to 31 March 2025. This deficit will be held in an unusable reserve, in line with the exceptional statutory override, which was introduced and continued by the previous government, and will run until 31 March 2026.

Capital Programme

38 The capital programme has been revised to take into account budget reprofiled from 2023-24 following the final accounts for that year and to take account of any revisions in the current year.

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

Author(s)

David Watchman, Finance Manager

Tel: 03000 268573

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

There are no implications associated with this report.

Finance

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

Consultation

There are no implications associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications associated with this report.

Climate Change

There are no implications associated with this report.

Human Rights

There are no implications associated with this report.

Crime and Disorder

There are no implications associated with this report.

Staffing

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

Accommodation

There are no implications associated with this report.

Risk

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

Procurement

There are no implications associated with this report

Appendix 2: CYPS Forecast position by subjective analysis

Budget Heading	Revised Annual Budget £million	Forecast Outturn £million	Variance £million	OCL £million	Contingencies £million	Cash Limit Variance £million
Employees	98.447	101.398	2.951	-0.155		2.796
Premises	5.316	6.104	0.788	0.107		0.895
Transport	40.431	40.688	0.257			0.257
Supplies and Services	16.042	25.082	9.040	-1.130		7.910
Third Party Payments	75.154	81.892	6.738			6.738
Transfer Payments	1.949	2.878	0.929			0.929
Capital	12.843	12.843	0			0
Central Support	29.869	27.744	-2.125		-0.629	-2.754
DRF	0	1.581	1.581			1.581
Sub-total Expenditure	280.051	300.210	20.159	-1.178	-0.629	18.352
Grant	-33.972	-40.829	-6.857			-6.857
Contributions	-4.759	-4.892	-0.133			-0.133
Sales	-0.050	-0.051	-0.001			-0.001
Charges	-20.162	-20.299	-0.137			-0.137
Rents	-0.342	-0.383	-0.041			-0.041
Recharges	-33.375	-33.462	-0.087			-0.087
Other Income	0.278	-3.209	-3.487			-3.487
Sub-total Income	-92.382	-103.125	-10.743	0	0	-10.743
Net	187.669	197.085	9.416	-1.178	-0.629	7.609

**potential rounding differences between this table and the summary table by Head of Service*

Appendix 3: CYPS Capital Budget 2024-25 as at 30 June 2024

CYPS	Actual 30/06/2024 £	Current 2024/25 Budget £	Budget Future Years £
Childrens Services-Childrens Care	58,981	4,891,452	250,000
Early Help Inclusion & Vulnerable Children-Inc SEN Capital	254,927	21,047,739	0
Education-School Devolved Capital	553,077	3,999,489	1,100,000
Education-School Related	12,448,928	67,847,201	22,686,741
Childrens Services-Secure Services	0	196,309	0
Childrens Services - Planning & Service Strategy	45,786	221,359	0
	13,361,698	98,203,549	24,036,741

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Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 September 2024

Quarter One, 2024/25 Performance Management Report



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To report our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our 2024-28 council plan to members, senior managers, employees and the public.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report contains the most recent performance data available on 30 June 2024, alongside contextual information of activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June).
- 3 As a large organisation providing a broad range of services, our operating environment can at times be challenging. It has been heavily influenced by various interconnected factors including inflationary and demand pressures, demographic shifts and the changing needs of our residents, economic uncertainties, and the ongoing impacts of global events.
- 4 In May, the Labour Party won the General Election. This ended 14 years of Conservative Party rule. It is too early to determine how the change of government will impact local government, both in the short-term and long-term. We will continue to provide updates in future reports.
- 5 However, we continue to show strong performance across our key outcomes.
 - (a) We are showing strong economic performance across the county. Key areas such as jobs, investment, demand for development land / industrial premises, and employment are all favourable compared to previous years. Our visitor economy continues to grow. It is now worth £1.2 billion to the local area and supports more than 13,000 jobs. Increased attendances have been recorded at all our cultural venues. However, challenges for the council include improving our GVA per filled job and improving processing times for planning applications.
 - (b) Key measures around waste collection and disposal show that we are diverting a smaller proportion of waste to landfill, and contamination of our household recycling continues to come down. We are building, with

regional partners, a new 'energy recovery from waste' facility which will meet the future needs of the county. More people are using our park and ride scheme following an expansion of its operating hours. Work is ongoing at national, regional and local levels to improve bus services.

- (c) Statutory demand for children's social care remains relatively consistent and re-referral rates are low compared to comparators. However, children taken into our care remains relatively high. A prolonged increase in requests for education, health and care plans has resulted in backlogs for educational psychologist advice. We have improved our processes and increased our capacity which have improved performance. Referrals into adult social care and Care Act assessments remain stable, and the number of people discharged from hospital to reablement and rehabilitation services is at a historic low. Our home care market is stable, care homes are rated either 'good' or 'outstanding', and waiting times for home care packages have been eliminated. Performance against homelessness outcomes are either stable or improving, although we perform worse than our benchmarks. We are continuing to see an increase in people presenting as already homeless.
- (d) The overall crime rate in County Durham has fallen and compares favourably with many council areas in the region. Although the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police remained static, the number of victims referred to our support services increased. Reports of fly-tipping remain low, environmental cleanliness is high, more long-term properties are being brought back into use, and response times to rectify category two highway defects are good. Of the private sector rented properties covered under the selective licensing scheme, 51% are fully licensed, in the process of being licensed, or have exemptions in place. There have been more serious casualties and fatalities from road traffic accidents. We are continuing to support road safety through road improvements and campaigns. Response times to rectify category one highway defects are worse than target (although 20% more were identified).
- (e) We are continuing to provide strong support to our most vulnerable residents through our financial support schemes - one of only a few authorities which offer support of this type and to this extent. The processing times of housing benefit and council tax reduction requests (both new claims and changes in circumstances) have improved further. More calls are being answered, with all telephone lines answering at least 80% within three minutes (our performance standard). Satisfaction with overall service delivery remains high, the majority of service requests meet (or exceed) their performance standard, and we are receiving fewer complaints. Although more days have been lost to and our sickness rate is now 0.08 days per full time equivalent employee higher than the same period last year, 60% of our employees recorded no sickness.

Recommendation(s)

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

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

Background

- 7 Our current [Council Plan](#) is a four year plan. It runs from the 2024/25 financial year to the 2027/28 financial year. It describes how we will effectively deliver our services whilst contributing to the aims of the [County Durham Vision 2035](#)¹.
- 8 Our plan aligns to both our Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced and our County Durham Plan which sets out a vision for housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and healthcare to support it.
- 9 We track progress towards achieving our strategic ambitions and objectives through our performance framework – a collection of key performance indicators (including metrics from Oflog’s Local Authority Data Explorer) contextualised with benchmarking data from similar authorities, and information from our service teams.
- 10 Progress is reported quarterly on an exception basis, using ‘easy to read’ dashboards focusing on trends, direction of travel, benchmarking and performance to target. Key messages are aligned to our five thematic areas (our economy, our people, our communities, our environment, our council) and are grouped into ‘things that are going well’ and ‘issues we are addressing’.
- 11 Our performance management processes align with the [statutory guidance](#)² recently produced by the government. The guidance sets out the ‘characteristics of a well-functioning authority’ and the ‘indicators of potential failure’. In relation to performance management, this includes:

Characteristics of a well-functioning authority

- The corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation’s performance to be measured and held to account.
- The use of performance indicators and Oflog’s Local Authority Data Explorer to manage risk and to benchmark against similar authorities and manage risk.
- The council has complete, timely and accurate data, and the skills to interpret it, to inform decisions.
- There are 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.
- Partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance.

¹ developed with our partners and the public. It sets out what we want the county to look like by 2035. It provides direction to key public, private and voluntary sector organisations enabling them to work together and improve the quality of life of our residents.

² [Best Value Standards and Intervention](#)

Indicators of potential failure

- A lack of 'good quality' data and insight to understand services.
- A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability.
- Performance management information is not consistently used, does not measure outcomes where relevant and underperformance is not effectively addressed.
- Data quality is poor and there is a lack of capacity or capability to interpret it to inform decisions.
- Services data suggests poor performance and outcomes compared to similar local authorities.

12 We continue to operate in line with the characteristics of a well-functioning authority, and over the last 18 months we have further strengthened these functions with:

- A higher level, more strategic Council Plan which gives the reader a more immediate sense of the strategic direction of the council and what we are intending to do.
- A renewed service planning process which simplifies and brings together organisational planning into the strategic planning cycle.
- A refreshed approach to quarterly performance reporting which provides greater insight into how our services are performing.

Conclusion

13 This report describes our progress towards achieving the strategic ambitions and objectives set out in our 2024-28 council plan to members, senior managers, employees and the public.

14 It contains the most recent performance data available on 30 June. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June). It provides insights into what is going well and the issues we are addressing.

Background papers

- [County Durham Vision](#) (County Council, 23 October 2019)

Other useful documents

- [Council Plan 2024 to 2028](#) (current plan)
- [Quarter Four, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Three, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter Two, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)
- [Quarter One, 2023/24 Performance Management Report](#)

Author

Steve Evans

Contact: steve.evans@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality measures are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

Climate Change

We have declared a climate change emergency and consider the implications of climate change in our reports and decision-making.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

A number of performance indicators and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with 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 One, 2024/25



Contents (blue text links to sections of the report)

[Executive Summary](#)

Our People:

[Performance Report](#)

Children's social care:

- ◆ [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 report shows how we are performing against the priorities set out in our Council Plan 2024-28.
- 2 We are reporting performance on an exception basis with key messages structured around the five thematic areas of, our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, and our council.
- 3 We are reporting the most recent performance available as at 30 June. Contextual information relates to activity and events taking place in the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June).

Our people

- 4 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

- 5 Demand for children's social care support remains consistent and re-referral rates are low compared to comparators. The new Early Help model is generating more partner-led Early Help assessments strengthening County Durham's system-wide capacity to deliver support to families in need. A wide-ranging programme of activity and support is being delivered in Family Hubs, and other venues with partners.
- 6 As part of our Placement Sufficiency strategy, we are providing more children's homes, and strengthening our existing provision with more management capacity and a "grow your own" approach to recruit new workers with no experience of residential care to tackle sector shortages. In 2023 we opened a new home. In 2024, we replaced another home and will open another new home in December. A new Edge of Care home should be open by the end of the year; to help young people to remain living at home and to prevent them going into care. Furthermore, we secured ongoing capital investment to ensure all our homes continue to be updated, are homely and fit for purpose.
- 7 School attendance is steadily improving following an increase in absence nationally, regionally and locally following the pandemic. We are working with schools to reduce or remove barriers to attendance and are providing opportunities for schools to share support and best practice. This includes regular conversations with schools to identify, discuss and signpost to services those pupils who are, or who are at risk of becoming, persistently absent from school. We are working closely with partners to develop a new Partnership Protocol – 'Working Together to Support School Attendance.'

Issues we are addressing

- 8 There has been a steady increase in requests for new EHCPs over recent years. This, along with a national shortage of educational psychologists (needed to undertake the required assessment) has impacted on the 20 week timeliness performance. We have made improvements to the assessment process and increased EP capacity - this is

starting to have an impact. We expect overall timeliness to steadily improve over the next financial year - 12% of EHCPs were finalised within 20 weeks in June.

- 9 Although statutory demand for children's social care remains low, children taken into our care remains relatively high. This is indicative of ongoing high levels of complexity and a change in the composition of demand.
- 10 The increase in children and young people Electively Home Educated is likely to be in part, a seasonal trend. Latest benchmarking for the autumn term of this academic year places the county in-line with national rates. The service continues to have strong well-established multi-agency Education at Home operational and strategic groups. They meet half termly with wide service representation including health, SEND and inclusion, education and skills, and wider children's services colleagues to consider suitable education and safeguarding of children. We are continuing to support 16-17 year olds who do not have a place in education, employment and training with our 'September Guarantee commitment'.

Risk Management

- 11 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 October and December 2023.

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

- 12 A recent [report](#)³ highlights that the North of England persistently records the highest rates of children in care, that families in the North experience disproportionately high intervention rates, and services in the North shoulder a greater share of a weighty economic cost. Key headlines from the report (based on 2023 data) include:
- More than 83,000 children were in care across England in 2023. This is a 15-consecutive-year high.
 - The North East continues to record the highest overall care rates.
 - Two thirds of the local authorities with care rates exceeding one percent were in the North (and most of these have consistently exceeded this threshold since 2019, demonstrating the unrelenting pressures).
 - The North accounts for 28% of the child population, but 36% of the children in care. There are 93 children in care per 10,000 of the child population in the North, compared to 62 in the rest of England.
 - Children's homes increased by 27% between 2020 and 2023 - 1,176 homes are in the North of England, and just 1,704 in the rest of England.
- 13 Another [report](#)⁴ recommends introducing a single, cohesive code for children exploited into criminal activity. This would include a new offence of child sexual exploitation, co-ordinated

³ [Fighting health inequalities through research excellence and collaboration](#): published April 2024 by Health Equity North

⁴ [by Action for Children](#)

policy and practice at both a local and national level, and more research into what works to learn from best practice.

Education – Suspensions and Exclusions

- 14 New [official statistics](#)⁵ show the 2022/23 academic year as a new high for suspensions and exclusions in a single school year.
- 790,000 suspensions - almost one for every 10 pupils - is 36% higher than the previous record of 578,000 (recorded the previous year).
 - 9,000 exclusions is 44% higher than the previous record of 7,900 (recorded for the 2017/18 academic year).
- 15 The increases are indicative of the changing and increasingly complex needs of children and young people, and this pattern is reflected in our schools.
- 6,704 suspensions is 42% higher than the previous record of 4,733 (recorded the previous year).
 - 85 exclusions is 12% higher than the previous academic year's (21/22) total of 76.
- 16 However, our suspension and permanent exclusion rates continue to be amongst the lowest in the region and similar to England averages. We are accessing funding that lets us work with schools (through Behaviour and Inclusion Panels) to support children and young people at risk of exclusion.

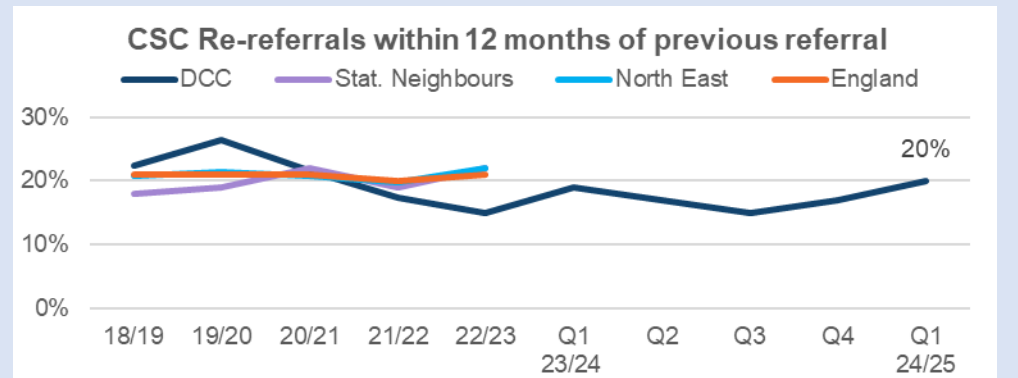
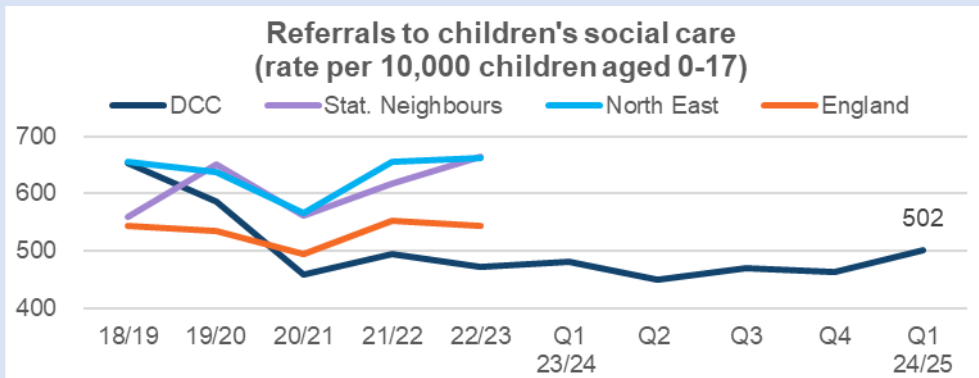
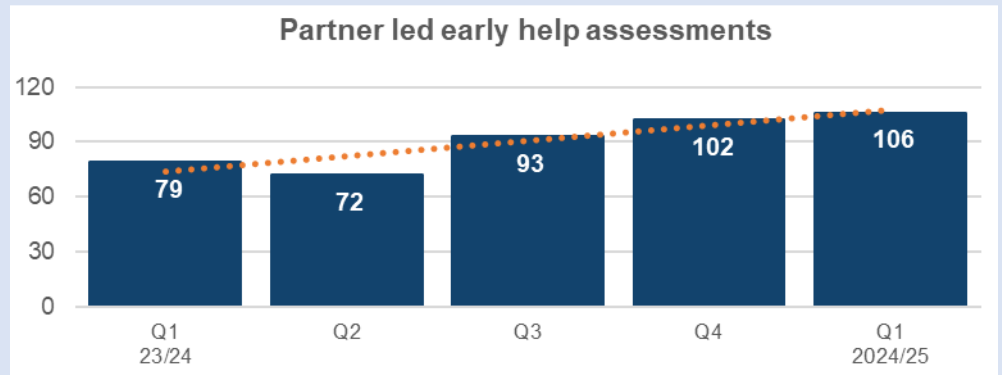
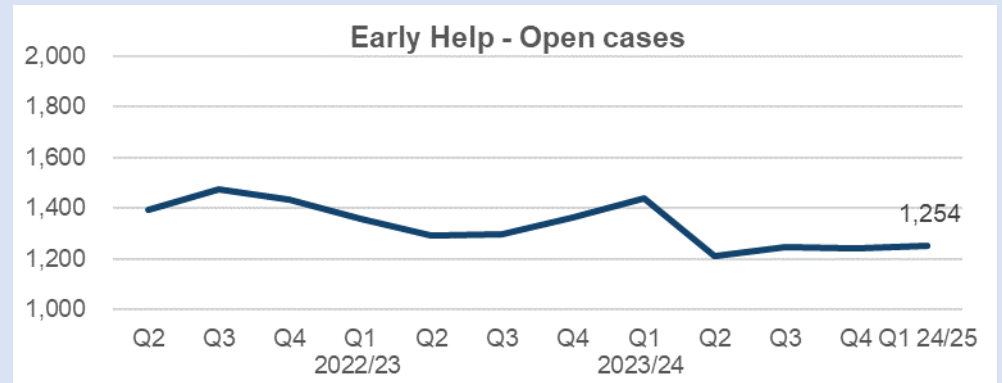
⁵ released by the Department for Education in July

Children's Social Care Dashboard: Early Help and Referrals

(12 months ending 30 June 2024 / at 30 June 2024)

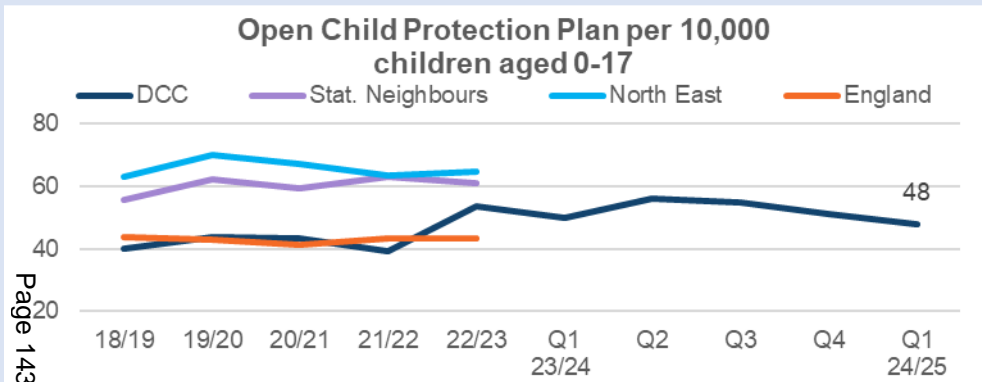
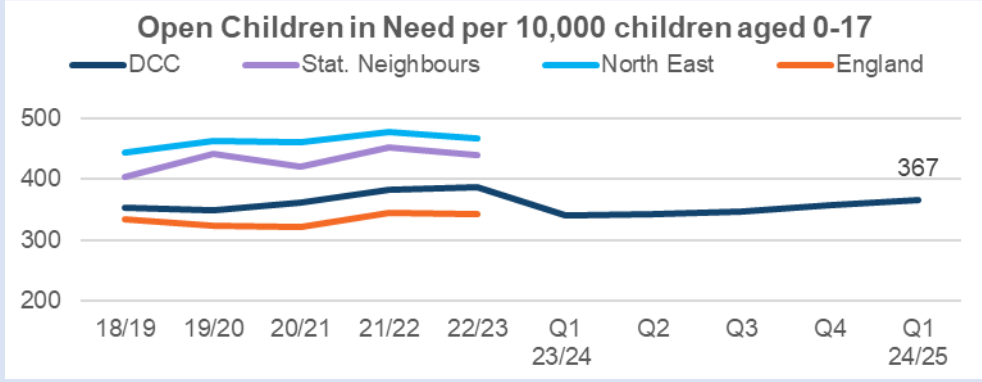
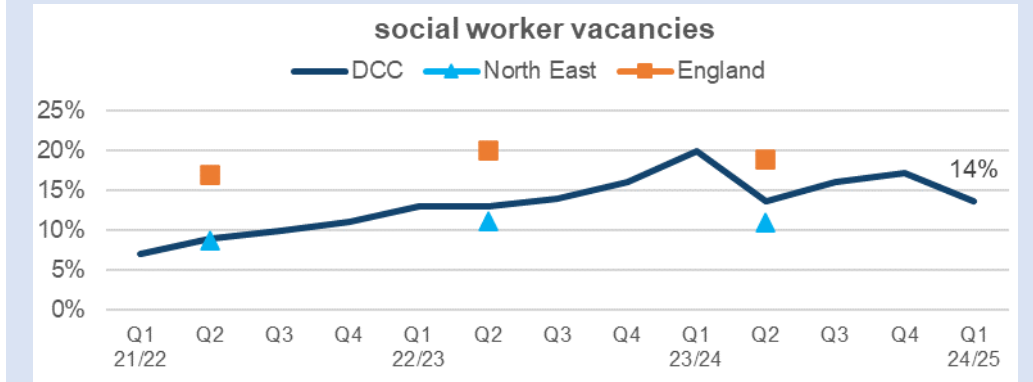
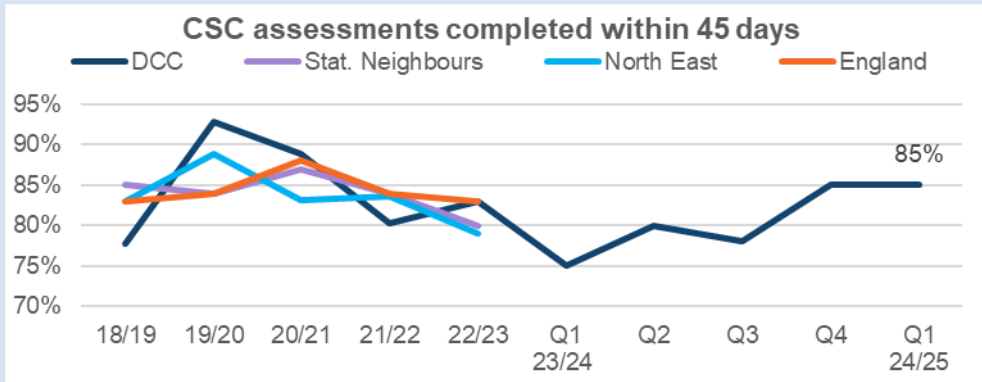
Early Help

- Demand reduced post-Covid, partly due to a change in operating model, with more partner led early help conversations.
- In April 2023, 15 Family Hubs were launched to provide 'one stop shop' access to family support (from conception to age 19, or age 25 for children with SEND). Between September 2023 and June 2024: 6,514 people registered (2,589 families), including 1,021 unborn or aged 0-6 months.
- Feedback from those working with the service remains positive:
 - 100% of parent/carers and 94% of young people are happy or very happy with the support received.
 - 97% of parents/carers and 96% of young people felt services worked well together to meet the needs of the family.
- Between October 2022 and June 2024, 3,565 assessment forms were submitted through the Early Help Assessment Portal. An increasing number (666,19%) were submitted by partners who are leading on assessments. Of these, the majority were from health (37%) and education organisations (22%).



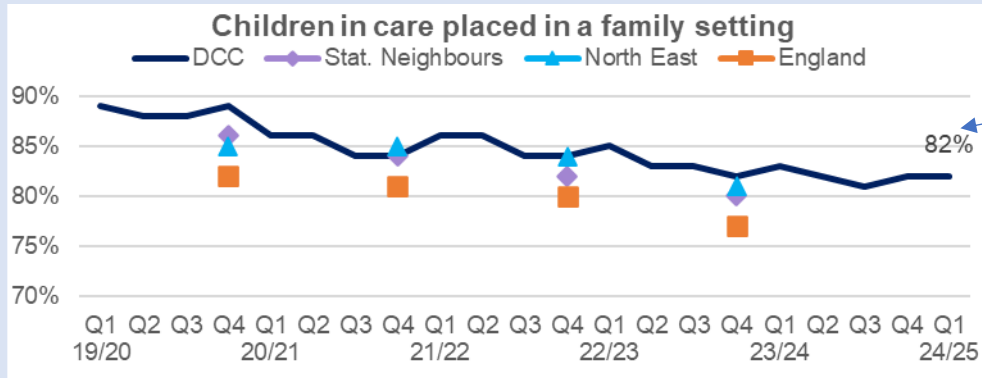
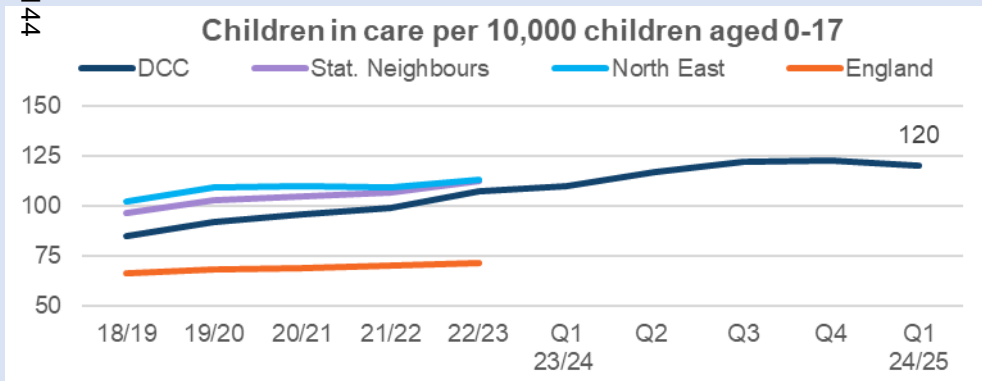
Children's Social Care Dashboard: assessments, protection plans, in need, social worker vacancies

(12 months ending 31 March 2024 / at 31 March 2024)

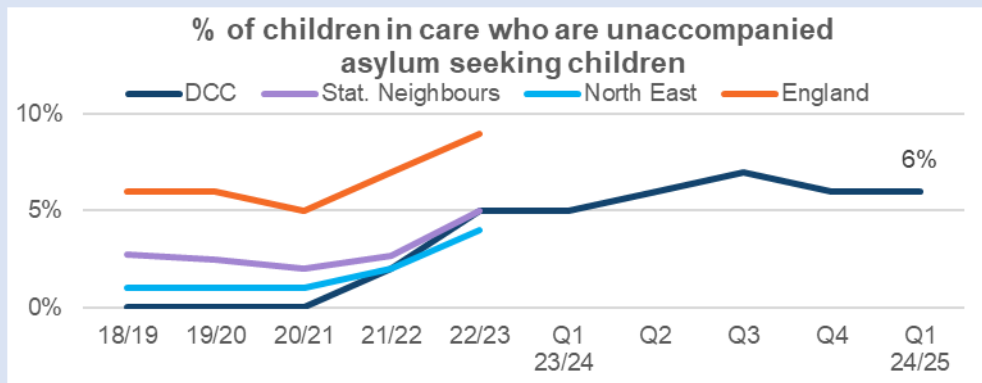


Children's Social Care Dashboard: in care, unaccompanied asylum seeking children

(12 months ending 31 March 2024/ at 31 March 2024)



Slight increase in the proportion placed in a family setting linked to increases in numbers placed in foster care and children in care starting to plateau



Children’s Social Care and Early Help

- 17 Overall demand for early help and statutory support remains consistent with previous reports.
- 18 We have developed (with key partners, children, young people, parents, and carers) a new Early Help Assessment for partners. It is based on an existing practice model and provides a richer picture of early help offered and its impact. Several partners are using the new assessment when a Team Around the Family arrangement is in place. We continue to work with partners who are not engaging with the process, to understand barriers and work with them on a solution.
- 19 Locality Early Help Conversations (LEHCs) are well established across the county. Rather than relying on formal referrals into the council’s Early Help Service, they use the collective resource available across the system. Our Family Hubs and Start for Life provide families with the support they need in a more accessible way.
- 20 Between April and June, we held 205 LEHCs which resulted in referrals and support from the voluntary and community sector (68), partner organisations (54), other support (34), Family Hub programme (19), Family Hub – referred to Early Help (170 and support from Early Help advisor (13).
- 21 Our Family Hubs deliver a broad range of activity and support. During quarter one (April to June), this included:
 - **Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Programme.** 199 children participated in: Chill Kids (133), Teen Zone (29), Staying Cool Teen (24), and Safer Choices (13).
 - **Parenting Programmes.** Teen Stepping Stones (SEND) (34), Fear-Less (school avoidance) (5), Triple P Teen (23), Incredible Years Baby (2), Toddler (7), Pre-school (4), and School Aged (18).
 - **Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities** (a parent-led suite of programmes). Being a parent (24) and Being a parent of an autistic child (8).
 - **Baby & Me (under 1s) and Toddler & Me (1–2-year-olds).** 1,118 individuals attended one or more session (325 available). Combined attendance was 4,621 (average of four sessions each).

22 To date⁶, we have supported 8,158 families through the Stronger Families programme. The target for eligible families achieving all sustained outcomes has steadily increased – doubling since the 2022/23 financial year (April 2022 to March 2023).

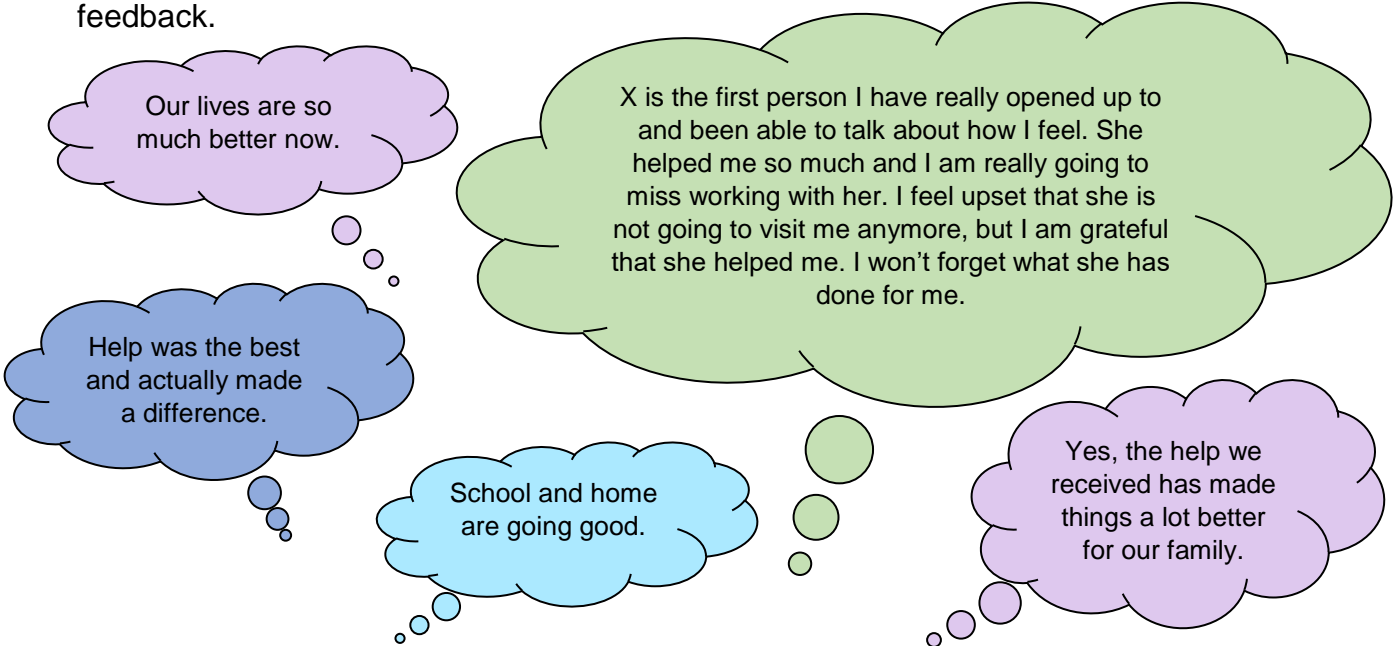
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Target	760	1,230	1,522

- 23 During the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year (April to June), 254 families were claimed. Therefore, the target for each remaining quarter of the financial year is 423.
- 24 In October 2023, a new framework was introduced. It now consists of 10 headline outcomes with changes to the eligibility and claim criteria. For example, for a family to be eligible for the programme, three headlines of identified need are now required (was previously two), and all identified needs require an outcome (previously only one was required for some headlines). Consequently, it is more challenging to meet the agreed

⁶ from its start in 2015 to the end of June 2024

target, but we are confident of achieving it with the system and operational changes we have made.

- 25 Upgrading our case management system in 2023 has enhanced operational efficiency. Innovative dashboards and reporting tools have been introduced, and we are working on data cleansing. Embedding these changes will take time but additional staff training is already yielding positive results, with data showing the programme is on the right path.
- 26 Over the last 15 months (April 2023 and June 2024), we worked with the families of 145 children using our Enhanced Parenting Support Pathway. Early Help Practitioners use family hubs to support families at risk of poor outcomes - from the antenatal period until a child is 2½ years old.
- 27 Between December 2023 and June 2024, we provided the families of 46 children with pre-birth Family Hub support.
- 28 One Point Service manages quality systems and collects feedback to learn and improve services for its users. This includes learning reviews, thematic audits, and service user feedback.



- 29 We continue to provide targeted support for domestic abuse, co-delivered with Harbour Support Services. During quarter one, nine families completed our new DART⁷ programme, 31 parents completed Inspire, and 23 mums completed You and Me Mum.
- 30 Twenty five young people were referred for Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse support. Of these, 23 progressed onto the Respect Young People's Programme and two were offered alternative support (one for bereavement and the other for wider domestic abuse support via Harbour due to being a victim in their own right).
- 31 Improved practice across statutory children's social care has led to a consistently low re-referral rate. The rate at quarter one (20%) is slightly higher than quarter four (17%), however it is still better than latest benchmarks as at 2022/23. This means fewer children and their families require further support from safeguarding services following support.
- 32 Although referrals and re-referrals into children's social care have increased slightly, they remain lower than 2022/23 benchmarks. Children and young people receiving intensive

⁷ Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together
Page 146

support remains relatively high which is indicative of continuing high levels of complexity and a change in the composition of demand.

Children in Care

- 33 We have 1,201 children in care, slightly fewer than the number recorded at the end of March. The North East has the highest level in England and County Durham is slightly worse than the North East.
- 34 The number of children in care has been increasing. This is partly due to receiving more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) as part of national relocation plans. At the end of June, 76 children in our care were UASC which equates to around 6% of the total. This is similar to the number recorded at the end of the 2023/24 financial year (April 2023 to March 2024) but higher than the numbers recorded in previous years.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number	20	58	79
% of total	2%	5%	6%

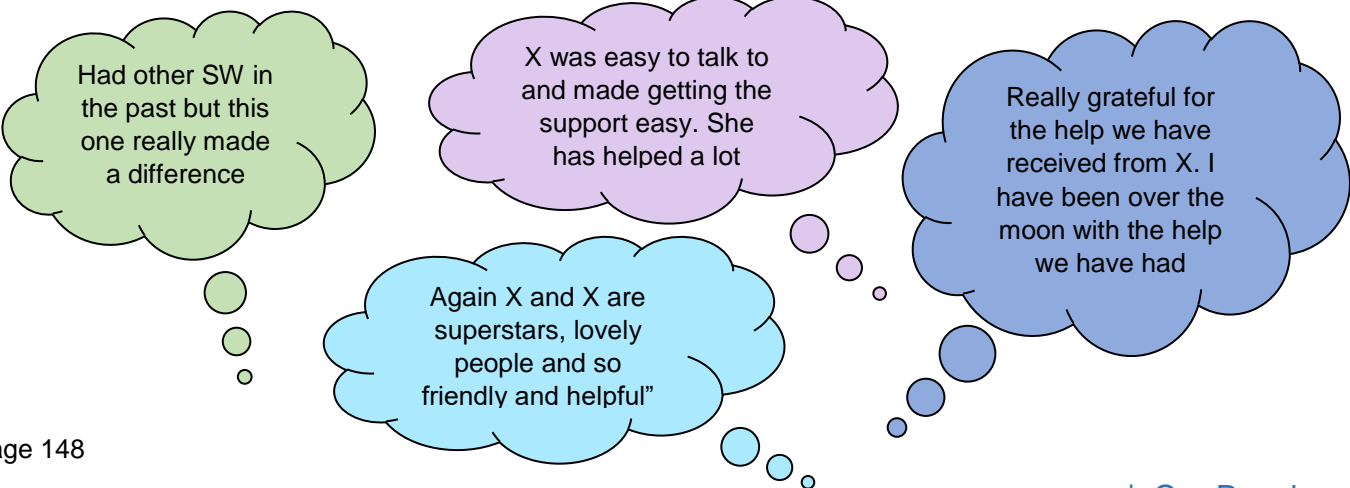
- 35 We have 12 children’s homes offering residential care to children and young people. All but one has been inspected by Ofsted, one has been rated as outstanding, seven as good, one as requires improvement and one as inadequate.
- 36 These homes provide support and care for young people who cannot live at home, and short respite breaks for children and young people with disabilities. We are strengthening our residential care teams, with deputy managers in post and a ‘grow your own’ approach to recruiting new staff with no experience of residential care.
- 37 More homes are being developed to ensure as many children as possible remain within the county and can maintain links with their schools, friends, families and hobbies. The new homes range in size (from one to four places) so that children and young people with more complex needs can be cared for. An Edge of Care home is being planned and should be open by the end of the year; this will offer short breaks and wider support to young people and their families to help them to remain living at home and to prevent them going into care.
- 38 A new home opened in 2023. In 2024, we replaced an existing home and will open a new home in December. We have also secured capital investment to ensure all our homes continue to be updated, are homely and fit for purpose.

Social Worker Caseloads

- 39 We are addressing the capacity issues arising from high caseloads which have been impacting the timeliness of statutory children’s social care assessments. During quarter one (April to June) we completed 85% of social care assessments within 45 days. This is our best performance for three years (89% as at 2020/21). Latest performance is also better than the 2022/23 national and regional benchmarks.
- 40 Our social worker vacancy rate has reduced. This is due to ongoing recruitment activity which included increased social media promotion supported by recruitment web pages. Having experienced recruitment challenges for more than two years, our Independent Reviewing Officer team is now fully staffed.
- 41 Recruiting experienced social workers remains challenging. Posts frequently need to be readvertised due to a lack of suitable applicants. New statutory guidance could make agency contracts less attractive to social workers, we are, therefore, encouraging social

workers employed by us on agency contracts to consider permanent employment. We are also promoting the council as a potential employer for agency workers working elsewhere.

- 42 Recruiting newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) is the most effective way to maintain or increase our social work workforce. In 2016, we created a Social Work Academy to support more NQSWs through their first year in practice. Our Academy now provides additional support to social workers in their second year of practice, and there are plans to extend that support into the third year. We anticipate 38 NQSWs will start with us in the summer.
- 43 To help us recruit more NQSWs we are continuing to invest in supporting social work qualifications through:
 - **Social work apprenticeship scheme.** 10 apprentices being supported to qualify while in their previous posts, are expected to graduate between 2024-2027.
 - **Social work trainees.** 18 trainees (internal and external recruits) are expected to qualify in 2027. A further 10 are expected to qualify in 2028.
 - **Step Up to Social Work scheme.** Five participants started the programme in January 2024, expected to qualify in spring 2025.
 - **Partnering with Frontline.** We will support nine participants from autumn 2024. These should qualify and join us as NQSWs in autumn 2025.
 - **Increasing social work training capacity.** By working within our regional partnerships. The Department for Education announced in April 2024 that no further funding will be made available for teaching partnerships, so the North East Social Work Alliance is working on proposals to progress this work.
- 44 Recruitment and retention of social workers remains a priority for us. We have enhanced pay, career development, progression and non-pay benefits (including wellbeing support) over the last year. Our wellbeing portal gives our employees information on topics such as physical activity, nutrition, remote working, mental health and emotional wellbeing, bereavement, domestic abuse, and substance misuse. We also provide specialist workshops on wellbeing and self-care.
- 45 We provide specialist support to employees involved in a traumatic event. De-brief sessions, reflection sessions and commissioned specialist support are designed to promote reflection and healing. Following a successful pilot, we are encouraging flexible working across our social work teams. This will help practitioners better balance their work and home life, and support those with caring responsibilities to stay in, or return to, the workforce.
- 46 We have received some feedback from parents about our social workers.

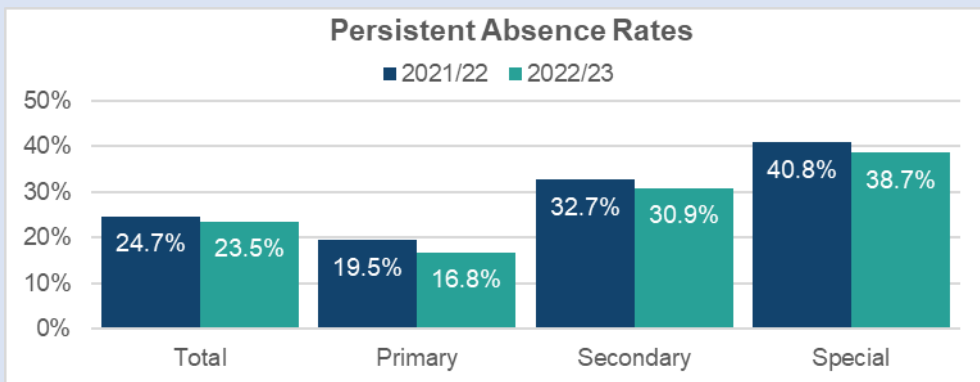
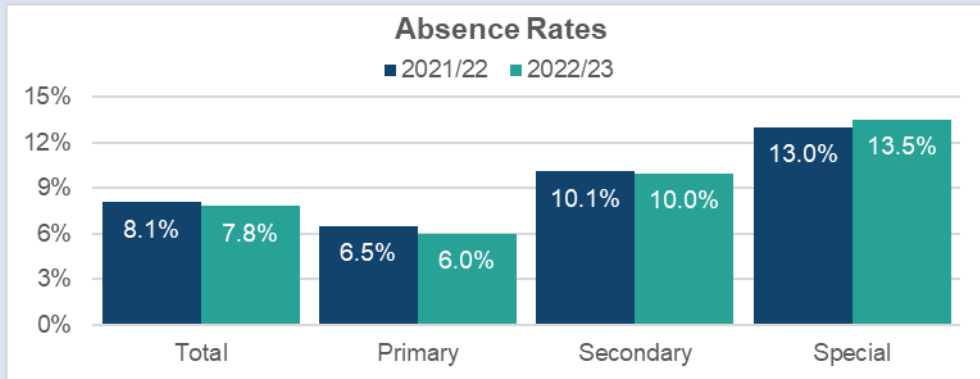


Education Dashboard

(2022/23 academic year / as at 30 June 2024)

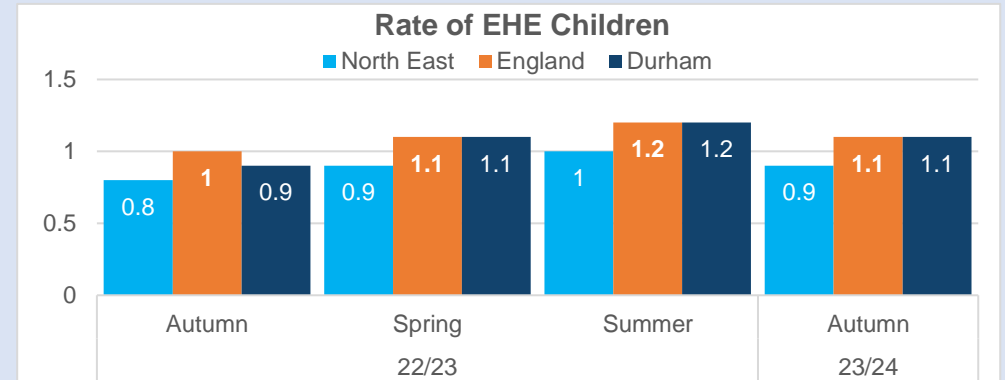
Attendance

- Official published absence data for the 2022/23 academic year shows a slight reduction in overall absence and persistent absence rates.
- Data published for the autumn term 2023/24 shows an improvement on absence rates compared to the same period last year, however it remains worse than pre-pandemic levels.
- Unauthorised absence makes up one-third of all absences in the 2023/24 academic year.



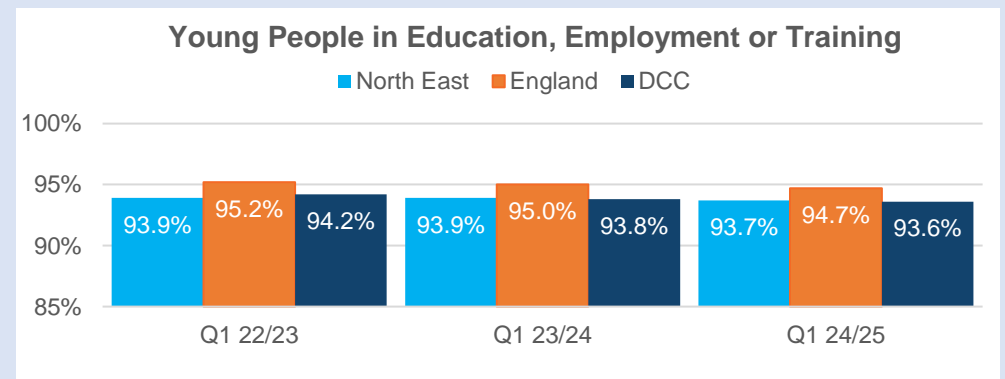
Elective Home Education (EHE)

The latest EHE figure is 1,088. As of the graph below, latest EHE rates show a dip although this figure is always lower in the Autumn Term.



Education, Employment or Training (EET)

A review of the data shows that nationally rates have reduced by 0.5% over the last two-year period – this compares to a decrease of 0.2% regionally and 0.6% in County Durham.



Attendance

- 47 There was a 0.3% reduction in overall absence during the 2022/23 academic year, compared to the previous academic year (2021/22). Over the same period, persistent absence reduced by 1.2%.
- 48 If we compare the autumn terms (September to December) of 2022 and 2023, we note that overall absence reduced by 0.4% and persistent absence reduced by 2.9%.
- 49 Barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and often specific to individual pupils and families. These barriers were exacerbated by the pandemic and school attendance rates nationally, regionally, and locally have reduced. Pupils with the highest attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance.
- 50 We are working with schools to reduce or remove barriers to attendance and are providing opportunities for schools to share support and best practice. This includes regular conversations with schools to identify, discuss and signpost to services those pupils who are, or who are at risk of becoming persistently absent from school.
- 51 We are developing with partners a new Partnership Protocol – ‘Working Together to Support School Attendance.’

Elective Home Education (EHE)

- 52 At the end of the 2023/24 academic year, 12% more children and young people were being electively home educated than the previous year (2022/23 academic year).

Education, Employment or Training (EET)

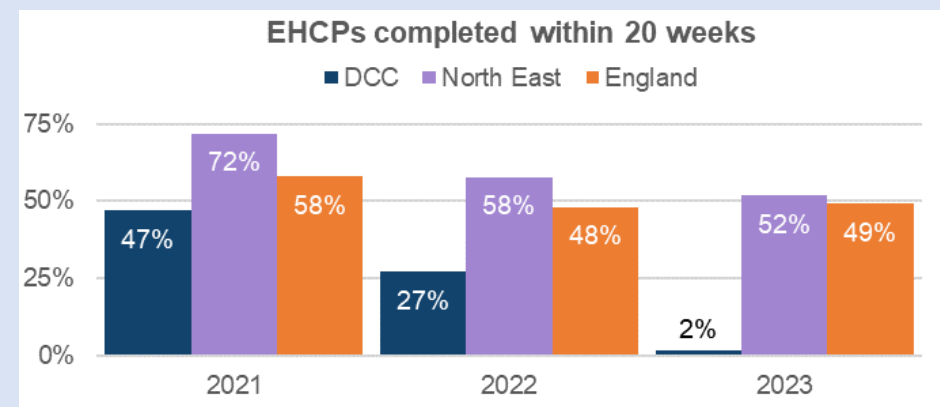
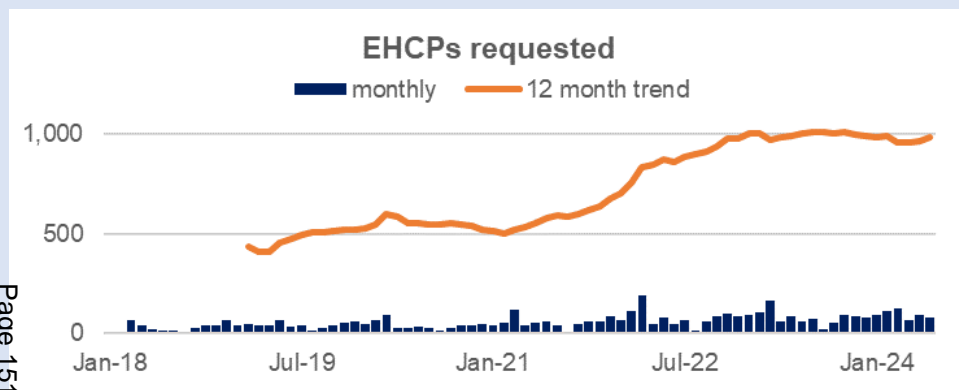
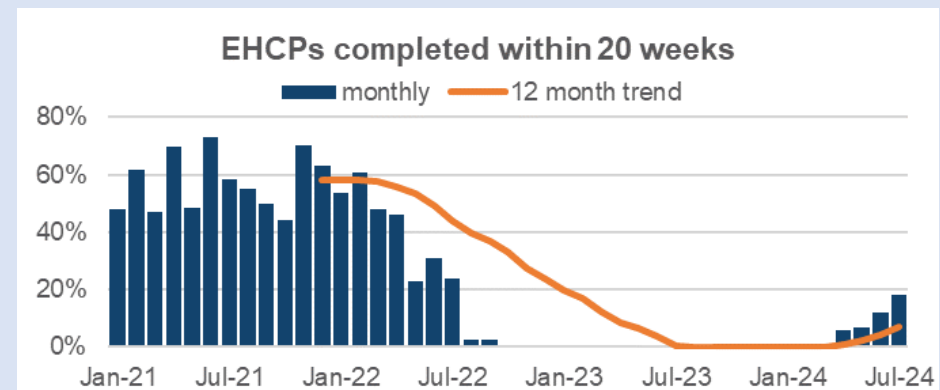
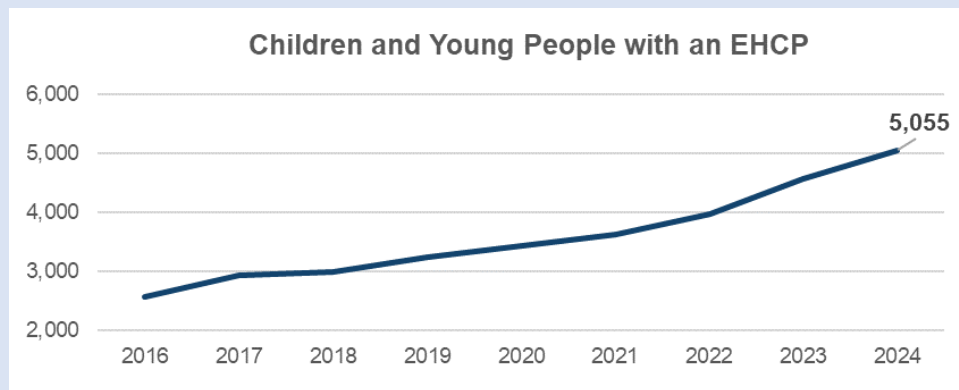
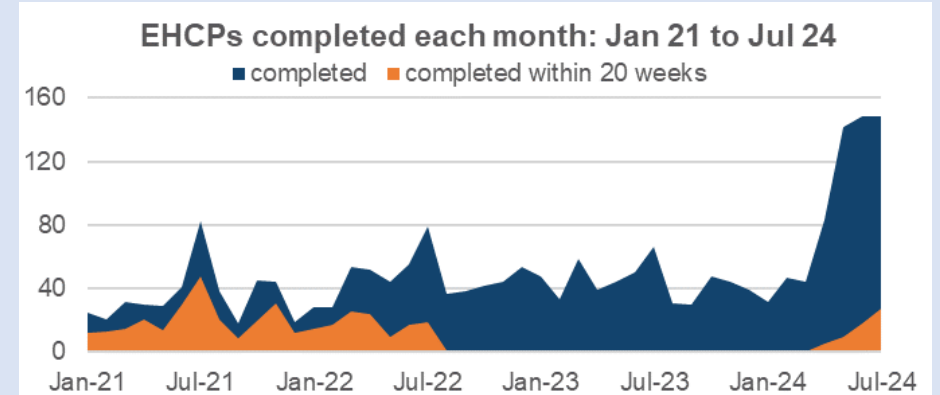
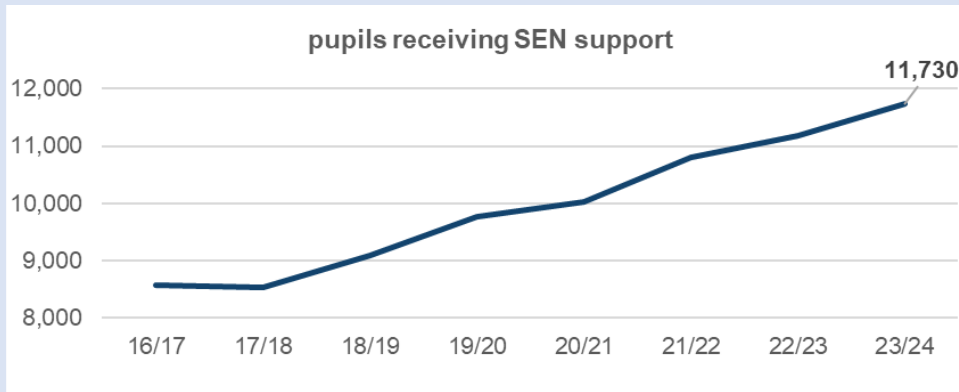
- 53 Almost 94% of young people (aged 16-17) are in employment, education or training. This is similar to the North East average but worse than the England average.
- 54 EET rates have reduced by half a percentage point over the last two years. The reduction is on par with the national reduction of 0.5 percentage points but worse than the regional reduction of 0.2 percentage points.

	County Durham	North East	England
June 2022	94.2%	93.9%	95.2%
June 2024	93.6%	93.7%	94.7%
Percentage point reduction	0.6	0.2	0.5

- 55 Mental health difficulties, alongside issues with attitude and motivation are becoming more prevalent.
- 56 We are continuing to support young people (aged 16 to 17) who do not have a place in education, employment and training. Over the summer, we are contacting leavers in years 11 and 12 to ensure they have secured, or are being supported to secure, a place for the 2024/25 academic year. This is our September Guarantee commitment – involving more than 11,690 young people.

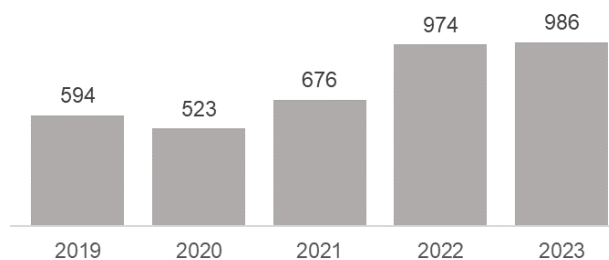
SEND Dashboard

(12 months rolling / annual data)



Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- 57 Requests for new EHCPs have steadily increased in recent years. On average, during 2019, we received 50 requests each month, we now receive 82.



- 58 The increased demand is impacting the timeliness of EHCPs. As is a national shortage of educational psychologists (EP) which are needed to undertake the required assessment, and the timeliness of education provider responses to consultation and capacity challenges in providing suitable provision.
- 59 As the number of children with an EHCP increases, the workload of our teams increases. More than 5,000 children now have an EHCP and they all require an annual review - we completed 2,348 annual reviews during 2024. In addition, a proportion of plans will result in a dispute so our dispute resolution work increases.
- 60 Improvements to the EHCP assessment process and EP capacity are beginning to impact on the system. A comprehensive action plan is in place to reduce delays, focusing on the backlog for EP advice.
- 61 Since January, two contracts for extra EP support have been in place. This has resulted in more assessments being completed. Since March, three agency workers have been focusing on drafting EHCPs. We are also recruiting two further agency workers to support the team and reduce pressures caused by the increase in EHCPs.
- 62 We have put in place a new process to prioritise cases on complexity of need, the educational stage in relation to key transitions, and the potential increased risk of harm as a result of delay. This is ensuring those in the most need get support at the earliest opportunity - children and young people identified as a priority experience no delay.
- 63 These changes have reduced unallocated cases within the EP service and the average time to allocate has fallen from nine weeks (autumn of 2023) to two weeks (February 2024).
- 64 We estimate the waiting list and waiting times for EP advice to steadily fall and overall timeliness to steadily improve through the next financial year (April 2025 to March 2026). However, this is dependent upon agencies delivering against agreed contract volumes, in-house EP capacity being maintained, and demand remaining steady.
- 65 We are aware that these pressures are also being experienced by other councils. We expect benchmarking data to be released during the summer so will include comparisons of our performance in the quarter two report.
- 66 Our SEND Local Partnership is developing actions to support and inform families whilst they wait for specialised services. It is working to; develop clear policy and guidance in relation to 'waiting well' practices, ensure needs are discussed at the first point of contact, gather feedback at the end of involvement, and greater understanding of the wider SEND offer.

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%	Apr21-Mar 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	Meeting or better than target	meeting or 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 2023	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%	No	No
					Children meeting expected standards in maths and reading at KS2	2024	59%	Tracker	65%	2024	59%	60%	61%	No	No
					Average grade of achievement within GCSE English and Maths to a Grade 5	2021/22	4.69	5 by 2030	new					No	No
					Disadvantaged cohorts meeting basic threshold measures in English & Maths	new			new					No	No
					Young people in education, employment and training	Jun 2024	93.6%	above N / NE	93.8%	Jun 2024	93.6%	94.7%	93.7%	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	at Jun 2024	1,254	Tracker	1,440					Yes	No
					Children's social care referrals per 10,000 population	at Jun 2024	502	Tracker	481	2022/23	473	545	663	Yes	No
					Children's social care re-referrals	at Jun 2024	20%	Tracker	19%	2022/23	15%	21%	22%	Yes	No
					Children's social care assessments completed within 45 days	at Jun 2024	85%	Tracker	75%	2022/23	83%	83%	79%	Yes	No
					Children in need per 10,000 population	at Jun 2024	367	Tracker	340	2022/23	387	343	467	Yes	No
					Children on a child protection plan per 10,000 population	at Jun 2024	48	Tracker	50	2022/23	54	43	65	Yes	No
					Children looked after per 10,000 population	at Jun 2024	120	Tracker	110	2022/23	107	71	113	Yes	No
					Care leavers aged 16-24	at Jun 2024	466	Tracker	282					Yes	No
					Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as a percentage of all CiC	at Jun 2024	6%	Tracker	5%	2022/23	5%	9%	4%	Yes	No
					Social worker vacancies		14%	Tracker	20%	Sep-23	14%	18.9%	10.9%	Yes	No
					Children in care in a family setting	at Jun 2024	82%	Tracker	83%	at Mar 23	82%	77%	81%	Yes	No
					Families on our Stronger Families Programme attaining significant and sustained outcomes	2024/25	254	1,522	983					Yes	No

Education KPIs

Page 156	D	T	C	G	Performance Indicator	Period	Performance	Target	12 months earlier	Benchmark period	DCC	National average	NE average	updated	Oflog
					Children in the EYFS achieving a good level of development	2022/23	66.2%	Tracker	64.5%	2022/23	66.2%	67.2%	66.3%	No	No
					Pupils attending a school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	87.2%	Tracker	83.1%	2023/24	87.2%	88.1%	87%	Yes	No
					Pupils attending a primary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	94.4%	Tracker	94.3%	2023/24	94.4%	91.6%	94.6%	Yes	No
					Pupils attending a secondary school judged 'good or better' by Ofsted	2023/24	76.9%	Tracker	75.3%	2023/24	76.9%	83.8%	76.8%	Yes	No
					Children - electively home educated	Jan-Apr 2024	1,088	Tracker	699					No	No
					Children eligible for free school meals	2023/24	32.4%	Tracker	30.6%	2023/24	32.4%	24.8%	14.8%	No	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 & young people with an EHCP	2024	5,134	Tracker	4,475					Yes	No
					New requests for EHCPs	2023	986	Tracker	974					No	No
					EHCPs completed within 20 weeks	2023	2%	Tracker	27%	2023	0%	48%	56%	Yes	No
					Pupils on SEN support	2023/24	10,953	Tracker	11,174					No	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%	No	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%	No	No
					Gap in breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks between County Durham and national average	2022/23	19.0pp	Tracker	18.7pp					No	No

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