



## Cabinet

**Date** Tuesday 4 June 2024  
**Time** 9.30 am  
**Venue** Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

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### Business

#### Part A

##### Items which are open to the public and press

1. Public Questions
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024 (Pages 3 - 6)
3. Declarations of interest, if any

##### Key Decision:

4. North East Devolution - Combined Authority Borrowing Powers - Report of Chief Executive (**Key Decision: CEO/2024/001**) (Pages 7 - 12)

##### Ordinary Decisions:

5. Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 - Report of Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Chair of Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board (Pages 13 - 58)
6. Update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 - Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 59 - 76)
7. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration
8. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

#### Part B

**Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)**

**Key Decision:**

9. Durham City Regeneration Milburngate Development - Joint Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and Corporate Director of Resources (**Key Decision: REG/2024/005**) (Pages 77 - 110)
10. 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  
24 May 2024

To: **The Members of the Cabinet**

Councillors A Hoggood and R Bell (Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council), Councillors T Henderson, C Hood, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, A Shield, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes

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**Contact: Michael Turnbull**

**Tel: 03000 269714**

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## Durham County Council

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 15 May 2024 at 9.30 am.**

**Present:**

**Councillor A Hopgood (Leader of the Council) in the Chair.**

**Cabinet Members:**

Councillors R Bell (Deputy Leader of the Council), T Henderson, S McDonnell, J Rowlandson, E Scott, J Shuttleworth and M Wilkes.

**Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Hood and Councillor A Shield.

### **1 Public Questions**

The Leader of the Council informed Cabinet that one public question had been received from Mr Watson. Mr Watson was unable to be present at the meeting, therefore a written reply would be provided following the meeting.

### **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

### **4 Workforce Strategy 2024-2027**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which requested the adoption of the Council's revised Workforce Strategy for the period 2024 – 2027 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder thanked the Corporate Director of Resources, the Head of HR and all of the officers involved in bringing the Strategy forward. The key priorities and detailed action plan that underpinned the strategy would provide a solid platform for the development of the workforce going forward. It was ambitious and far reaching and would help

create the workforce for the future. The single biggest asset to the Council was 'Our People' and the strategy would support all employees regardless of their role. It would ensure necessary focus and prioritisation of the Council workforce going forward. The strong relationship between officers, staff, trade union representatives and elected members would be central to the strategy. The Council had always held strong relationships in these areas and these would need to continue for the challenges ahead.

Councillor S McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital, Procurement and Customer Services spoke in support of the report and in doing so, added her thanks to the officers for bringing the report forward. The Council had exited the pandemic as a different organisation, doing things differently, but always with the customer in mind. The Council did not get everything correct all of the time, however, no organisation did. The Council always learned from that and sought to move forward in the right direction. Services provided by the Council were relied upon by many people and the workforce made a difference to the lives of customers each and every day. Without the workforce the Council would not be able to improve the lives of the people served and Councillor McDonnell was more than happy to support the recommendation and recognised the important role the strategy would have on the transformation journey going forward and to good customer care. The workforce would be crucial to this success.

#### **Resolved:**

That the recommendation in the report be approved.

### **5 Shopfront Design Guide, Energy Efficiency, Renewables and the Historic Environment, Biodiversity and Non-designated Heritage Asset Supplementary Planning Documents - Report of Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to commence consultation on four Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). It was the second draft of the Shopfront Design Guide SPD and Energy Efficiency, Renewables, and the Historic Environment SPD, and the first draft of the Biodiversity SPD and Non-designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) SPD. All four documents would support the County Durham Plan (CDP) adopted in October 2020 (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

Councillor E Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships thanked the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth for the huge amount of work in the development of the themes and documents, which would supplement the County Durham Plan adopted in October 2020. Shopfronts were the first point of contact between the businesses and the public. The SPD would help improve the general standard of design and help improve town centres and local business. The Energy Efficiency, Renewables, and the Historic Environment SPD would help

property owners improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings and recognise that the historic environment should play its part in local and national net zero goals. The Biodiversity SPD was a key component of the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan and would help ensure that new developments delivered the best outcomes for biodiversity. The NDHA would provide clarity to developers and the community on how NDHAs were assessed. Consultation was key and the Council were now seeking views on all SPDs.

Councillor M Wilkes, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Climate Change explained the relevance and need for the supplementary planning documents which provided additional detail and clarity and expanded on the priorities of the County Durham Plan. For example, they would help residents to install solar panel and make improvements to their homes, whilst protecting the historic environment.

Biodiversity was critical to ensure that developments had the least impact on the environment. The protection of riverbanks and streams and the need to ensure a wild habitat for species was hugely important. The loss of biodiversity over the years had been breathtaking, and the work being done within the County in these areas showed leadership, contributed to the physical and mental health of residents whilst protecting, improving and bringing back biodiversity for future generations. There was also a call for developers to go beyond the minimum national standards wherever they could. Cllr Wilkes urged as many people to respond to the consultation.

Councillor R Bell, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance noted that the Government had recently set out the mandatory requirements for the majority of developments to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity. The biodiversity supplementary planning document was important in this respect and demonstrated how gains could be achieved and supported.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

**6 Exclusion of the public**

**Resolved:**

That under section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

**7 Speculative Development of North East Assembly Integration and Test Facility on NETPark Phase 3A [Key Decision: REG/2024/006]**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth which sought approval to progress an inward investment enquiry (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

**8 Lease of Aykley Heads Southern Car Park, County Hall, Durham**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth and the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services which sought approval to lease an area of land at the council's main Headquarters (County Hall) building (for copy of report, see file of minutes).

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

**Cabinet**

**4 June 2024**

**North East Devolution – Combined  
Authority Borrowing Powers**



**KEY DECISION NO: CEO/2024/001**

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## **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Hewitt, Chief Executive**

**Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

None

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek consent to the making of regulations by central government to provide the new mayoral combined authority, NECA, with borrowing powers in line with the devolution deal and the scheme which was subject to public consultation.

### **Executive summary**

2. Further to The North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 being made on 20 March 2024, the new combined authority, NECA, came into existence on 7 May 2024.
3. In order for NECA to be able to support its functions, it was envisaged that the combined authority would have borrowing powers. The above Order makes provision for borrowing powers in relation to NECA's transport functions. However, borrowing powers for other functions must be dealt with by separate Regulations.
4. This report seeks in principle agreement to consent to the making of the Regulations and delegated authority for the Chief Executive to provide that consent when requested to do so by the Secretary of State.

## **Recommendation(s)**

5. Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) agree in principle that the Council should consent to the making of the Regulations; and
  - (b) authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to issue the Council's formal consent to the Secretary of State when requested.



## Background

6. In December 2022 HM Government announced a minded to devolution deal with the seven local authorities across the North East. To implement the deal, the Councils needed to establish a new mayoral combined authority for the region.
7. Following the making of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority (Establishment and Functions) Order 2024 (referred to below as “the 2024 Order”) and the election of the Mayor, the new combined authority – NECA – came into existence on 7 May 2024.
8. As part of the devolution deal, it was envisaged that NECA would have borrowing powers to support its functions. This was set out in the scheme which was published by the seven local authorities for consultation as part of the process of making the 2024 Order. Borrowing powers for NECA’s transport functions were included in the 2024 Order. However, central government’s legislative procedures mean that the borrowing powers for other functions must be conferred on NECA by a separate statutory instrument (referred to in this report as “the Regulations”). NECA and the constituent councils must provide their consent before the Regulations can be made.
9. Securing borrowing powers will help NECA to properly discharge its functions and assist in delivering the combined authority’s vision, policies and priorities.
10. Central government had indicated that they intended to lay the Regulations before Parliament before the summer recess, providing that NECA and its constituent authorities give their consent. However, the announcement of the Parliamentary General Election means that the Regulations are unlikely to be laid within that timeframe.
11. The provision of borrowing powers to NECA will support the Council to deliver across its key priorities. It is therefore important that the constituent authorities provide consent so that the Regulations can be progressed at the earliest opportunity following the general election. It is therefore recommended that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, is authorised to give formal consent to the making of the Regulations when requested by central government.
12. It is anticipated that the Secretary of State will issue his request for the Councils’ and NECA’s consent to the making of the Regulations in early July so that they can be laid in Parliament ahead of the summer recess. The Regulations will state the date on which they will come into effect.

**Background papers**

- None

**Other useful documents**

- None

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**Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Regulations will be made under section 23(6) of the Local Government Act 2003.

### **Finance**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the proposals in this report. In exercising its borrowing powers, NECA will comply with the Prudential Code which applies to local authorities and will also be subject to a borrowing cap agreed with HM Treasury.

### **Consultation**

The intention for NECA to have borrowing powers was set out in the scheme which was published by the seven local authorities for consultation as part of the process of making the 2024 Order.

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

In developing the proposals for the new combined authority, the Councils had regard to their obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (ie the public sector equality duty). As set out above, these proposals envisaged that the new combined authority would have borrowing powers.

### **Climate Change**

The green agenda is a critical element of the devolution deal and therefore the provision of borrowing powers to NECA would help to deliver those initiatives identified in the deal.

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Staffing**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

**Risk**

If the consent of the Councils and/or NECA is not provided, this will prevent the Regulations from being made and NECA will not have the benefit of the borrowing powers.

**Procurement**

None

**Cabinet**

**4 June 2024**

**Early Help Strategy 2024-2026**

**Ordinary Decision**



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**Report of**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service and Chair of Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board**

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services**

**Electoral division affected:**

Countywide.

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present Cabinet with the updated Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 for endorsement.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The review of the current Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help commenced in 2023 involving a range of stakeholders and has now concluded.
- 3 The newly titled County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-2026 (see Appendix 2) is based on evidence about the needs and wants of children and their families living in County Durham and from what partners across the early help system feel collectively they can achieve.
- 4 The strategy is also based on the priorities of the Prevention and Early Help Partnership which are underpinned by the national Supporting Families Programme, the Family Hub and Start for Life programme and the Reducing Parental Conflict programme and specifically reflects how County Durham can improve early help support offered to families. It also seeks to reflect the Government's direction of travel for family help and social care set out in Stable Homes Built on Love.
- 5 A Strategy Development Group was established to oversee the development of the strategy, including the coproduction process and to

ensure local partners, voluntary and community sector (VCS) representatives, children, parents and carers were involved in its development.

- 6 Coproduction sessions took place with children, parents and carers to develop the new strategy which is based on what is important to those who use and need early help support. Data and intelligence have also informed the strategy about what we know are the needs of the wider population and what our priorities should be over the next 3 years.
- 7 It is planned to launch the strategy in June 2024 by children and Durham's Family Hub Parent and Carer Panel.
- 8 The new strategy will run from June 2024 until the end of March 2026 to align with the timescales for the revised Growing Up in County Durham Strategy 2023 – 2026.
- 9 The strategy includes what we intend to deliver through the Family Hub and Start for Life programme. Additionally, as school attendance is a high priority both locally and nationally and with the Attendance Alliance aspirations being integral in supporting children to achieve in all areas of life, this is a key focus of the Early Help Strategy: supporting children to regularly participate in learning that meets their needs and supporting their aspirations as they transition into adulthood. It is recognised within the strategy the contribution effective early help have on supporting children and families with a range of multiple and complex needs in helping to address and mitigate these needs before the need for statutory social. Where social care interventions have been required, a range of early help support can also be provided during and after social care intervention ensuing children and families receive the range of help that builds safety and resilience.

## **Recommendations**

- 10 Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) Note the work on developing the new Early Help Strategy and
  - (b) receive and endorse County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26.

## Background

- 11 The Prevention and Early Help Partnership supported the review of the current Strategic Partnership Approach to Early Help in March 2023 and through a partnership group the following was agreed:
- (a) The strategy is based on evidence about the needs of children and their families living in County Durham, which can be found on [Durham Insights](#).
  - (b) Coproduction sessions with children, parents and carers and a range of partners to develop the strategy in order to base it on what is important to those who use and need early help support, building on families own strengths and those of communities.
  - (c) The strategy would have a refresh based on key principles informing the approach, style and format:
    - (i) Application of County Durham Approach to Wellbeing Principles.
    - (ii) Early Help support delivered using an i-Thrive Model (a graduated approach to meet family need).
    - (iii) Co-production with children, parents and carers.
    - (iv) The strategy to be short and succinct and written in a way that is easily understood by a young person/ family member.
    - (v) Avoid duplication of information that can be found elsewhere but for the strategy to reference and link appropriately.
  - (d) The wider context of County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26 references other strategies where common themes and issues were identified, to avoid duplication.
  - (e) The new strategy will run from Spring 2024 to March 2026 to align with the timescales for the review of the Growing Up in County Durham Strategy.

## Consultation

- 12 Consultation has taken place throughout the development of the strategy at 3 key stages:
- (a) **Stage 1** – March 2023 to July 2023 – coproduction sessions with children, parents, carers and partners to establish the vision for the strategy and the priority areas that the strategy should focus on.

- (b) **Stage 2** – October 2023 – December 2023 – Prevention and Early Help Partnership consulted on the proposed vision statement, approach, commitments and priorities which were informed by the coproduction sessions.
  - (c) **Stage 3** – January 2024 – February 2024 – further consultation on the proposed strategy document was carried out through a public online survey which also went to all stakeholder groups involved in stages 1 and 2 of the consultation. The survey was based on the presenting draft strategy, giving stakeholders the opportunity to feedback before final approval of the strategy by the Prevention and Early Help Partnership and Starting Well Partnership in March 2024.
- 13 Following the analysis of results from stages 1, 2 and 3 of the consultation, the new County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-26 is attached at Appendix 2. Details of the consultations can be seen in Appendix 3.

### **Focus of the new strategy**

- 14 The new vision for the strategy is: “We will support children and families at the earliest opportunity to help them thrive”.
- 15 Children and families identified a range of ways in which they want early help to be offered, which the strategy highlights.
- 16 Some key government drivers are identified within the strategy, for example, the new Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Supporting Families Programme, Family Hub and Start for Life Programme, Reducing Parental Conflict and the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. The Early Help Strategy includes five high level commitments that identify the key areas of work which the Prevention and Early Help Partnership will focus on and where they can add value to improve outcomes for children and their families.
- 17 Underpinning these high-level commitments are six key priority areas that will be owned by the Prevention and Early Help Partnership and subgroups of the Starting Well Partnership who will develop detailed action plans to deliver the Early Help Strategy.
- 18 The strategy identifies eleven key measures that will be used to know if we have been successful in helping families and delivering on the strategy.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 19 Implementation of the strategy will have a positive impact on a number of protected characteristics, for example, relating to age – the development of a network of Family Hubs will provide a range of local support and services to parents from pregnancy to children as they grow from babies into young adults. Also, relating to disability/SEND, including mental health and



emotional wellbeing, children and families will be offered support that is accessible and delivered in a way which meets their needs. In terms of gender, the approach is likely to have a greater beneficial impact overall for women who are more likely to be the main carer in families. There are also specific targeted measures to improve the involvement of men (male carers and dads) which is positive.

- 20 County Durham's Early Help Approach is founded on a relationship based culture, building valued and trusted relationships with families and amongst services and organisations supporting children and families. Our approach is to tailor support to individual families as all families are unique and this in turn underpins an inclusive approach.
- 21 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 4.

## **Conclusion**

- 22 The development of the updated County Durham Early Help Strategy has been led by the Prevention and Early Help Partnership supported by a partnership strategy development group. Children, parents, carers and partners have been involved from the start in shaping the strategy and a robust consultation process has been in place throughout the development of the strategy. Communication and relationships will be maintained with children, parents, carers and partners across the lifespan of the strategy through to adoption and monitoring of outcomes.

## **Background papers**

- None

## **Other useful documents**

- None

## **Author**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 outlines that local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local Authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services, which can be delivered through a Family Hub model where they exist, based on a clear understanding of local needs. The safeguarding partners should publish a threshold document, which sets out the local criteria for action and should include the process for early help assessments, and the type and level of early help and targeted early help services to be provided under sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2004.

### **Finance**

A range of local and government funding focusses on the delivery of Early Help including Supporting Families Grant, Family Hub and Start for Life and Reducing Parental Conflict funding in addition to partners' responsibility to provide effective early help as part of their duty / contracts. Resource considerations continue to be a challenge due to the high pressure on all public finances which may be significant in coming years.

### **Consultation**

Details of the consultation are provided in this report. Partners, children, parents and carers have been provided with an opportunity to shape the direction and the content of the strategy and will continue to be involved throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

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

An Equality Impact Assessment (attached Appendix 4) has been undertaken as part of the process for developing the new County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-26 and there are no protected characteristics that are negatively impacted by the strategy.

### **Climate Change**

The new strategy contributes to the current priorities within the Climate and Emergency Response Plan which focuses on climate change.

### **Human Rights**

There are no adverse implications.

## **Crime and Disorder**

Crime prevention and tackling crime, including anti-social behaviour, is a Headline Outcome in the County Durham's Family Outcome Framework which is the evidence base for the national Supporting Families Programme. This is a key component of the Early Help Strategy.

## **Staffing**

Any necessary staffing resources will be agreed, and the Prevention and Early Help Partnership and Family Hub Implementation Group will guide resource decisions and priorities.

## **Accommodation**

There are no accommodation implications.

## **Risk**

A clear strategy is vital to ensure the right early help support is offered to Durham families at the earliest opportunity.

## **Procurement**

Commissioners will take account of County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26 when procuring services aligned to children and families.

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## **Appendix 2: County Durham's Early Help Strategy 2024-26**

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Attached as a separate document.

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## Appendix 3: Consultation – Stages 1, 2 and 3

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### Consultation - Stage 1

Taking a whole family approach, a programme of coproduction sessions were arranged with children, parents and carers via the Strategy Development Group (SDG). These sessions took place during March and July 2023 and feedback from these sessions was incorporated into the strategy.

A range of consultation activity also took place with partners from across the Early Help System using a variety of bespoke consultation workshop sessions.

Collectively the views of children, parents, carers and partners informed the development of the following:

- a vision for the Early Help Strategy for all County Durham’s children and families
- the ‘approach’, how partners should, in their practice, deliver the strategy

Activities included work with the Youth Council, Family Hub Parent and Carer Panel, a range of children, families and parent/carer groups which incorporated children and parent/carers from different backgrounds via Voluntary and Community Sector groups, Youth Groups, One Point (LA Early Help Service), Harrogate District Foundation Trust (0-25 Family Health Service), Family Hubs, Gypsy Roma Traveller Communities and Harbour.

Engagement has also taken place with partners from across the Early Help System via Prevention and Early Help Forums, the Prevention and Early Help Partnership, VCS Alliance, Education Safeguarding Partnership and Education’s Designated Safeguarding Lead Networks.

In total, 16 different workshops took place with children, parent, carers and partners during stage 1 of the consultation with the views of approximately 230 being obtained, the youngest child was 6 years old.

Feedback from these sessions was analysed during August/September 2023 to identify common themes and issues which could be incorporated into the strategy.

Following the feedback analysis, and together with evidence and the input of the Strategy Development Group, a draft vision and approach were identified.

The themes emerging of how children, parents and carers wanted partners to deliver County Durham’s Early Help Strategy, the ‘approach’ to delivering support to families, were as follows:

- Accessible – support for all families
- Right support at the right time – early help support we know works, offered to the ‘whole family’ at the earliest opportunity
- Environment – support delivered in a place families can access, feel comfortable, welcome and safe
- Working together – families and partners working in partnership to improve outcomes for children and families, families not feeling ‘done to’ and partners sharing information and coordinating support effectively
- Choice for families - how families want their support delivered to them
- Listening to families – the voice of children, parents and carers to inform the individual support they receive and also help shape the design and delivery of the early help offer
- Partner’s behaviour – partners to be honest, respectful and non-judgemental of families
- Strengths based approach – building on what is working well for families

## Consultation - Stage 2

The second stage of the consultation took place between October and December 2023 and involved the Prevention and Early Help Partnership and LA Senior Managers reviewing the feedback from stage 1 of the consultation. It was agreed that the ‘approach’ to early help for families, as identified above, needed to be accompanied with identified commitments and priorities for the next 3 years. The Prevention and Early Help Partnership commitments were already well understood due to the self-assessment that was undertaken as part of the National Supporting Families Programme in July 2023 using the Early Help Systems Guide. Key areas of work could be identified under the following **five** themes:

- Leadership
- Workforce
- Families
- Communities
- Data and Information

During this second stage of consultation there were a number of priorities identified however there was a consensus that this Early Help Strategy was to be focussed on those that the Prevention and Early Help Partnership were leading and not duplicate the priorities of other strategic/partnership groups. The agreed priorities for the next 3 years were identified as:

- supporting children’s mental health and emotional wellbeing
- supporting good school attendance

- co-producing and embedding the Family Hub and Start for Life offer
- promoting healthy family relationships and protecting children from the harm of domestic abuse
- promoting positive and nurturing parenting
- promoting financial stability

The Prevention and Early Help Partnership was also further consulted on the vision for the Early Help Strategy and agreed to obtain feedback in the final stage, stage 3 of the consultation on the then proposed vision of:

“We want to support children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity to help children thrive”

### Consultation - Stage 3

The draft strategy was consulted on with the general public and wider stakeholders, during stage 3 of the consultation process, which ran from 19 January 2024 to 16 February 2024, via an online survey. The survey was promoted by stakeholders through their networks and channels established in stage 1 of the consultation.

The consultation asked:

- Is the vision clear?
- If no (the vision is not clear), how can it be clearer?
- Are the statements outlined in the Early Help ‘approach’ clear? If no, how can they be clearer?
- Is there anything missing (in our approach)? If yes, tell us what is missing?
- Are our commitments right? If no, what would you change?
- Is there anything missing (in our commitments)? If yes, please tell us what is missing?
- Are our key priorities right? If no, what would you change?
- Is there anything missing (in our priorities)? If yes, please tell us what is missing?

There were 76 responses to the survey, which were, in the majority, positive and supportive of the vision, approach, commitments and priorities.

The following is a breakdown and a selection of comments highlighting the key responses to the questions asked which have been incorporated into the final Early Help Strategy.

Question	Yes %	No %
Is the vision clear?	93	7

If no, how can it be clearer? Comments included:

- The only comment is why the support is for children, young people and families and the thriving part is only applied to children? The vision could be more inclusive if it was, 'We want to support children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity to help them all to thrive'.
- Possibly saying 'we will' rather than 'we want to.'
- In the foreword first/opening paragraph it mentions babies and children - we know that the majority of people see early help for babies and children and not for teenagers, and this reinforces that view. The remaining paragraphs do talk about young people – I think we need to change the opening paragraph, if we are going to say babies then we should say teenagers or we just say children?

Question	Yes %	No %
Are the statements outlined in the Early Help 'approach' clear?	92	8

If no, how can they be clearer? Comments included:

- Less words

Question	Yes %	No %
Is there anything missing (in our approach)?	12	88

If yes, please tell us what is missing? Comments included:

- Education, this needs to be before people have children i.e., education at school. Parenting skills are vitally important and should be complete from a young age not when a child is born, but prior, to educate people how to be a good parent and what impact 'bad' parenting has on a child.
- Some statements give intent and justification, some intent only. Could condense but the content is good and agree.
- Use 'Doctor' rather than GP as some people don't know the term GP.

Question	Yes %	No %
Are our commitments right?	97	3

If no, what would you change? Comments included:



- Not "incorrect" but I feel the text under leadership its sensible, and a good approach. However, I wouldn't define this as "leadership" as its more 'everyone's business'.
- No mention of 'time frames' and commitments not SMART.

Question	Yes %	No %
Is there anything missing (from our commitments)?	11	89

If yes, please tell us what is missing? Comments included:

- Working with all members of the family and actually listening to their views even in cases of broken families.
- Parents and families need to be mentioned more - their responsibility.
- Reducing Parental Conflict bullet – could we state that parental conflict is conflict which occurs within an equal relationship (no imbalance of power) to differentiate it from domestic abuse which is described later in the document, we have had many examples where the two agendas have been confused so think it would be helpful to make this really clear within the strategy.
- Shared resources under leadership - co commissioning opportunities to avoid silo working.
- Data and information - perhaps needs something about gathering data from a variety of sources to enable better outcomes for children as opposed to just making better use of.

Question	Yes %	No %
Are our key priorities right?	97	3

If no, what would you change? Comments included:

- Education, how to become a parent needs to begin in school. Unfortunately, some children do not have the correct role models and require outside intervention at a young age. Children need to have an awareness of how their parenting impacts upon their children. This needs to be done at school not when they are pregnant or have had a child, a more proactive approach is needed.
- Yes but 'promote' has been used a lot, could possibly change up and include terms that are similar i.e., support and actively encourage etc.

Question	Yes %	No %
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Is there anything missing?	25	75
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If yes, please tell us what is missing. Comments included:

- Criminality needs to be included somewhere.
- A much earlier proactive approach is required to educate young people before they have a baby or enter into a relationship.
- I don't like 'good' attendance at school, I think it could read better something like, 'to assist with breaking down the barriers towards school attendance' or 'promote positive and successful attendance'.
- Promoting children with SEND getting the best start in life, with the right help at the right time and being part of the community.
- A suggestion would be to include a priority linked to children and young people achieving their goals and aspirations as they transition into adulthood - not essential as think it could be covered under 'financial stability' but maybe a reference to this somewhere? There is plenty of data to support this need or maybe just a reference to the NEET figures in terms of the current situation and why we need early help?
- Priority 4 Needs to be more explicit that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right.
- CAPVA – needs to be written out fully – Child Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA)
- SEN support for families.
- As well as promoting good school attendance, should there be something about supporting sustained progression into post-16 learning?
- Consider additional wording: promote CYPs mental health and emotional wellbeing, add to supporting text the 5 ways to wellbeing - keep active - take notice – connect - keep learning – give, because not everyone will know what they are.
- Co-produce and embed our Family Hub and Start for Life offer. In the supporting text change 'the early antenatal period' to pregnancy so pregnancy and until your child is two/2yrs.
- Ensuring very basic needs are met, food, shelter, warmth etc i.e., physical needs.
- Reference to suitable and appropriate housing.
- Missing references to older children including no reference to offending/reoffending figures (including ASB).
- Don't use the word 'neglectful' under 'nurturing parenting'.

The comments from the consultation were analysed and used to update the content of the final Early Help Strategy 2024-2026. Some of the changes that were made as a result of feedback from stage 3 include:

- The decision was taken to refer to 'children' and families throughout the strategy with the intention of being fully inclusive of babies, young people and teenagers but avoiding the strategy becoming 'too wordy'.
- The vision was changed to 'we will', rather than 'we want to' and amendments to reflect the vision to support all families to thrive, not just children.
- The Early Help 'approach' statements were reduced in words, where possible, without losing the meaning of what children, parents and carers told us as part of consultation stage 1.
- There is agreement that education in schools to children looking at parenting skills is vital however, it is felt that education's Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) already supports this.
- The term 'GP' has been changed to 'Doctor'.
- Where feedback referenced commitments and priorities not being SMART, there is a detailed delivery plan that underpins the Early Help Strategy therefore, to keep the strategy concise, the decision was made not to include timeframes other than the overarching 2024-2026 timeframe given for the strategy.
- The feedback relating to working with the whole family, 'even broken families' and more responsibility to be put on parents' is felt to already be included in the strategy through the improved engagement of Dads and Male Carers and through the Signs of Safety/Wellbeing practice model.
- Reference to the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme was expanded to support the differentiation between this and Domestic Abuse.
- The 'Leadership' commitment was reworded to reflect collaboration and integration which would include co-commissioning opportunities and the 'Data and Information' commitment reworded to state data and intelligence would be used 'from a variety of sources'.
- Where suitable, a variety of words, other than 'promote' were used for the strategy's priorities.
- 'Crime Prevention and Tackling Crime' (including anti-social behaviour) is one of the 10 Headline Outcomes within the County Durham Family Outcome Framework providing the partnership framework to evidence how effective the Early Help System is in supporting families achieve positive and sustained outcomes. This, coupled with the initial principles of how the development of the new strategy would be undertaken to avoid unnecessary duplication with other strategies, it was decided not to have 'reducing crime' as a key priority outlined in the Early Help Strategy albeit the actions of the Prevention and Early Help Delivery Plan will contribute to this.
- Consideration was given to using the term 'good' education, however a decision made to keep this reference as it is a familiar phrase

which is commonly used nationally and also stated in the County Durham Family Outcome Framework Headline Outcome 1.

- References to supporting children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) were unchanged as it was felt that the Early Help Strategy 'approach' was inclusive of all children and families including those with SEND.
- Changes were made to the priority to 'promote financial stability', to reflect the feedback of explicitly referencing supporting children's aspirations into adulthood which would include those not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Appropriate references to Domestic Abuse (DA) were reworded to reflect the new 2021 DA definition with children being victims of DA in their own right.
- Acronyms, including CAPVA (Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse), were written out in full to aid understanding.
- The 5 ways to 'wellbeing' were outlined in full within the Early Help Strategy priorities (connecting with others, being active, taking notice of surrounding, keep learning and giving to others).
- References to the 'early antenatal period to pregnancy' were changed to 'pregnancy and until your child is two/2yrs', to aid understanding.
- Within the Early Help 'approach' and within the Strategy's 'financial stability' priority, an emphasis was made on ensuring basic needs were met and what this could include e.g., food, warmth (fuel bills).
- Consideration was given to explicitly reference 'appropriate housing' in the Strategy however, due to a commitment to keep the strategy succinct and avoid duplication and for the same reasons outlined for not explicitly referencing crime and anti-social behaviour, it was felt that 'appropriate housing' is captured within the Family Outcome Framework under Headline Outcome 9, 'Secure Housing'.
- The term 'neglectful' was removed albeit references to 'neglect' remain within the strategy.

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## **Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment**

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Attached as a separate document.

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County Durham's

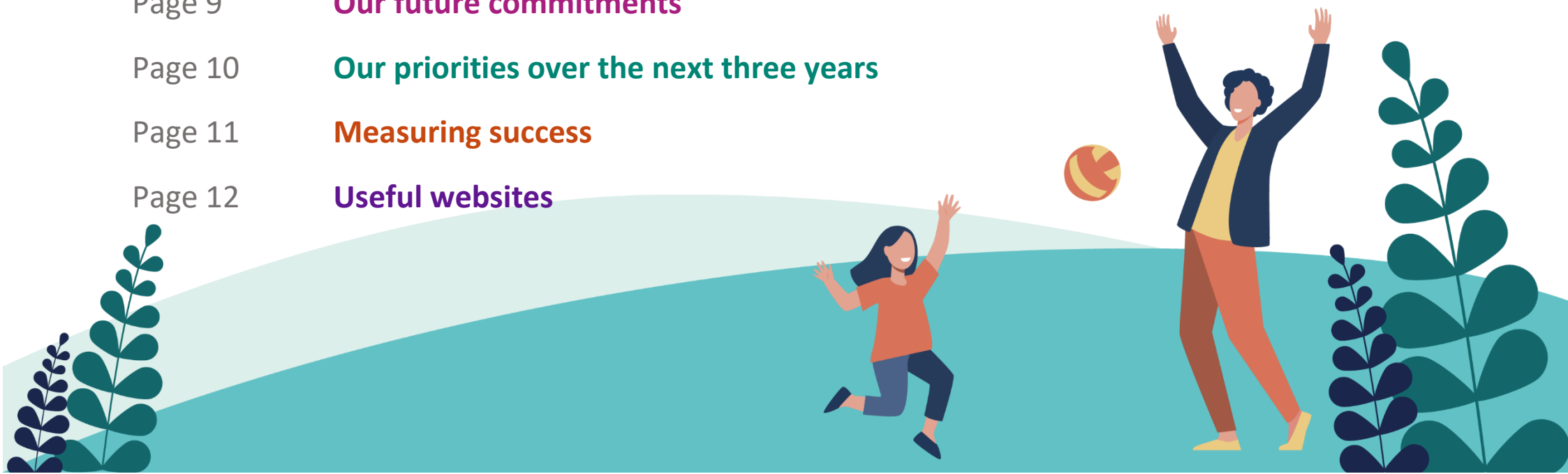
# early help

Strategy 2024 - 2026



# Contents

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# Foreword

In County Durham we have a vision to support all children and families to achieve their goals in life, in an environment that is safe, happy and healthy. We recognise that all families need support from time to time to help their children thrive, whether that's from friends, family, volunteers, or services. Our ambition is for every family to receive ***the right support at the right time and in the right place***. We want all families to have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their children, and to look after their own wellbeing.

Durham's Early Help Strategy focuses on building positive and trusted relationships, between services, our communities and most importantly families. Our early help offer is focussed on identifying needs for the whole family at the earliest opportunity and using our collective support to respond swiftly and effectively.

We are committed to working together with children and their families, and in partnership with health, education, criminal justice and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to ensure our support offer is accessible and meets the needs of all families in County Durham.

The County Durham Early Help Strategy sets out what we will do over the next 3 years to make sure that children and families get the early help they need.

## What do we mean by Early Help?

Early help is not a service but a way of working and relies on local services working together with children and their families to identify who needs help and how best to meet a family's needs. Identifying families who need support and working with them at the earliest opportunity regardless of the age of the child can help improve their lives. This also includes identifying children and families with a range of multiple and complex needs in order to provide effective early help to mitigate these needs and reduce the need for statutory children social care interventions. Where social care interventions have been required, a range of early help support can also be provided during and after social care intervention ensuring children and families receive the range of help that builds safety and resilience.

Early help is offered everyday by voluntary and community organisations including volunteers and charities, Family Hubs, schools, universal health services, Doctors etc. It is the term used in Durham that describes our approach to supporting children and their families to prevent problems emerging (prevention), or as soon as problems emerge (early help). This could be on a whole range of social, health, educational or financial issues.

Some of the young people we work with have helped us make an [Early Help in County Durham animation](#) to explain who we are and what we do.





# National context for Early Help

## Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. The guidance highlights the need to ensure we take a child centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family. It recognises that all families can face challenges that make parenting difficult. Often families are able to overcome challenges themselves or with the help of relative, friends and services such as schools, health visiting and mental health services. However, sometimes families have more significant needs that require more intensive help and support. The guide also recognises that early help is NOT a service, but a system of support delivered by Local Authorities and their partners working together to take collective responsibility to provide the right support.

## Supporting Families Programme

The national Supporting Families Programme, known in Durham as Stronger Families is about building resilience by providing effective, whole family support at the earliest possible opportunity, where joined up local services are able to identify families in need and provide them with the right support at the right time.

## Family Hub and Start for Life Programme

Family Hubs provide a 'one stop shop' for families from pregnancy, through the early years and up to 19 years or 25 years for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Family Hubs provide a place-based way for local services to come together to improve access, improve connections between families, professionals, services and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family support. The Start for Life offer focusses support for families from pregnancy up to a child being 2 years old.

## Reducing Parental Conflict

There is strong evidence that frequent, intense and poorly resolved parental conflict can have a negative impact on children's mental health and long-term life-chances such as their education, health and happiness. Parental Conflict is conflict which occurs within an equal relationship (no imbalance of power). In response to this, the government developed the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme to reduce parental conflict and improve these outcomes. In Durham, we call this 'Relationships Matter' and have trained our workforce to support parents and carers to improve the quality of their co-parenting relationship whether they are together or separated.

## Independent Review of Children's Social Care

In 2023 the government published a new vision to transform Children's Social Care: 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy' ('Built on Love') in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. The government sets out a number of key ambitions including the need to provide Family Help to ensure all children and families can get the right help at the right time, no matter what they need or where they come from as well as making this help easier for children and families to get.

There are 115,000 children and young people (aged 0 – 19) in County Durham with almost 4,800 live births annually.



The information to the right makes plain the scale of the challenge for the county and why we need to provide high quality early help to those who need it.



- 1 - Durham Insights
- 2 - TEVV Research looking at the impact of COVID People Survey in England
- 3 - Durham County Council Case Management Data
- 4 - Mental Health of Children and Young People Survey in England

# Our vision for County Durham

*We will support children and families at the earliest opportunity to help them thrive.*

## Who 'we' are?

When we talk about 'we', that includes everyone in the Early Help system who works with children and their families, networks and local communities to help build family resilience.



# The Early Help System and Governance

The governance and oversight for Durham's Early Help System is provided by the multi-agency Prevention and Early Help Partnership, reporting to the County Durham Starting Well Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board for County Durham.





Being here for all children, young people and families.



Working with families at the earliest opportunity.



Making it as easy as possible for families to find out about our support.



Offering a range of support such as online, digital and face to face, so families can choose what is right for them.

Working with the whole family.

Listening to families and the voice of children.



Designing and delivering services with the people who need them.

Tailoring our support to individual families as all families are unique.



County Durham's



# early help

Approach 2024 - 2026



We do this by...

Working together with other services, sharing information, organising and co-ordinating support to families.

Not judging families and by being honest, respectful, understanding and reliable.

## County Durham's Early Help Approach

...is founded on a relationship-based culture, building valued and trusted relationships with families. Our guiding principles shape the way we deliver support across our Early Help System to families in County Durham. We do this by...

Providing support we know works, in a way families understand, and delivering this in places they feel comfortable and safe.



Listening to families when we don't get things quite right so we can make it better as soon as possible.



Building on the strengths of families, believing in them and helping them be more confident in managing difficult times.

# What we have achieved so far



In our last Strategy (2019-2023) we said we wanted services to work better together and be more joined up around communities (place-based). We have achieved this by creating 7 Locality Early Help Conversations across the county where services come together and agree how they will best support families to meet their needs.

We also said that services would more effectively share information and data to help us better understand and address the collective issues children, families and communities are facing and provide a more collective and effective response.

We continue to improve this through our established Prevention and Early Help Partnership and 3 Prevention and Early Help Forums. These bring services together to share information on worries they may have that are emerging in communities and consider how together they can best support and improve these.



We said we wanted to improve how we collected and used a range of data to help services better understand individual, family and community needs. We have made good progress with this and now have an online portal where services can, where appropriate, share information about families they are supporting. This helps to better connect and join up services and not duplicate and repeat support to families that has not helped before. We now have a 'Group Work' module capturing the work carried out in Family Hubs which helps us to know what families like to attend the most. We have also began using an IT system called 'Single View', which supports Childrens Service's practitioners in better understanding the needs of families and be able to provide more effective support.



We said we would build resilience and encourage independence within families and communities. We continue to use a model of practice called Signs of Safety/Wellbeing which builds on the strengths of families and helps them identify those people most important to them, who are their natural support network.

We continue to work closely with our Voluntary and Community Sector and help connect families to the support in their community as this is part of their wider network.

We have continued to develop our offer of evidence-based programmes to families through our [Family Hubs](#) and have established a parent peer support programme called [Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities](#) (EPEC). EPEC trains parents in a range of parenting programmes and those parents then deliver to other parents across County Durham.

# Our future commitments

The national Early Help System Guide provides a 5-point framework to support early help partnerships to develop an effective Early Help System based on local need.

Using this framework, we commit to:

## Leadership

We will promote our early help offer and ensure early help is seen as everyone's responsibility.

We will foster a shared relationship-based culture and an early help approach which promotes collaboration and integration and deliver what we know works for children and families in County Durham.

## Workforce

We will work together to build a confident and competent early help workforce. We will continue to implement the Signs of Safety/Wellbeing approach and use common tools such as the Family Outcome Framework, Early Help Assessment and Child and Family Practice Toolkit to help be consistent in our approach. We will also develop a Team Around the School (TAS) approach and ensure every school has a named Early Help Advisor who will offer ongoing support.

## Families

We will provide support to those who need it in the right place, at the right time and in the right way including digital, face to face and outreach support. We will ensure we take a child centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family. We will also provide support that we know works. We will co-produce and develop Durham's Start for Life and Family Hub offer with Mam's, Dad's and carers so that we know what they need. We will use the family's voice as an important measure of what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

## Communities

We will work alongside our local communities to ensure offers of support meet local need using all our collective assets, community resource and knowledge. We will continue to build our connectivity with local Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations to help build support around families near to where they live.

We will also continue to harness the skills of local parents and carers to provide peer support to other parents and carers.

## Data & Information

We will gather data and intelligence from a variety of sources to achieve better outcomes for children. In line with Working Together 2023, we will promote proactive information sharing as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children. We will effectively and safely share information, so families do not need to repeat their stories. We will use our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to inform our Early Help Offer.





## Based on our current data and intelligence of children and family need, we will focus on the following priorities over the next three years

### We will support children's mental health and emotional wellbeing

We will develop and implement a robust, graduated response to children's emotional wellbeing which ensures children and their families are offered the right support at the right time. Support will focus on building resilience and promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing (connecting with others, being active, taking notice of surrounding, keep learning and giving to others).

### We will promote good school attendance

We will support children to get the most out of their educational opportunities, especially those most disadvantaged, by supporting them to attend school regularly and promoting their aspirations as they transition into adulthood.

### We will co-produce and embed our Family Hub and Start for Life offer

We will ensure that all babies and children have the best start in life by providing a robust support offer for families with children aged 0-19 years and 25 years with SEND. The Start for Life offer will focus on a robust universal and targeted offer from pregnancy until a child reaches 2 years of age aimed at promoting nurturing parenting, a positive home learning environment and the health and wellbeing of the child and family.

### We will promote healthy family relationships and protect children from the harm of domestic abuse

We will offer a range of support aimed at promoting healthy family relationships from pregnancy through the early years and into adulthood. We recognise children are victims of Domestic Abuse in their own right, in their seeing, hearing, or experiencing the effects of Domestic Abuse. We will provide support to families impacted by Domestic Abuse using a range of evidence-based interventions such as Domestic Abuse Recovery Together (DART), Inspire and Respect Young People's Programme where Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) is a presenting issue.

### We will promote positive and nurturing parenting

We will promote positive and nurturing parenting and identify and address neglect at the earliest opportunity.

### We will promote financial stability

We will promote financial stability by ensuring all families have access to information and support to improve their financial wellbeing, help parents meet their child's basic needs and support young people's aspirations as they transition into adulthood.



# Measuring Success

It is important that we use measures of success to monitor if we are getting things right for children and families.

The following measures will let us know how well we are doing:



Increase in the number of children identified and effectively supported to improve their emotional wellbeing without need for specialist intervention

Increase in the number of Early Help Assessments across the Early Help Partnership

Increase in the number of families achieving positive outcomes as described in the [County Durham Family Outcome Framework](#)

Increase in the number of children and parent victims of Domestic Abuse reporting feeling safer

Increase in the numbers of Mams, Dads, carers and babies accessing Durham's Start for Life offer

Increase in the number of Dads/Male Carers engaged in family support work

Increase in the % of children who are school ready, improved school attendance and reduced exclusions

Increase in the number of families receiving support to improve the quality of their co-parenting relationship (Reducing Parental Conflict Programme)

Increase in the number of multi-agency practitioners, community members, parents and carers (Empowering Parents Empowering Communities Programme) trained in Early Help related programmes

Increase in the number of families supported effectively where neglect is a concern without the need for Childrens Social Care

Increase in the number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive

# Useful Websites



[Durham Safeguarding Childrens Partnership](#)

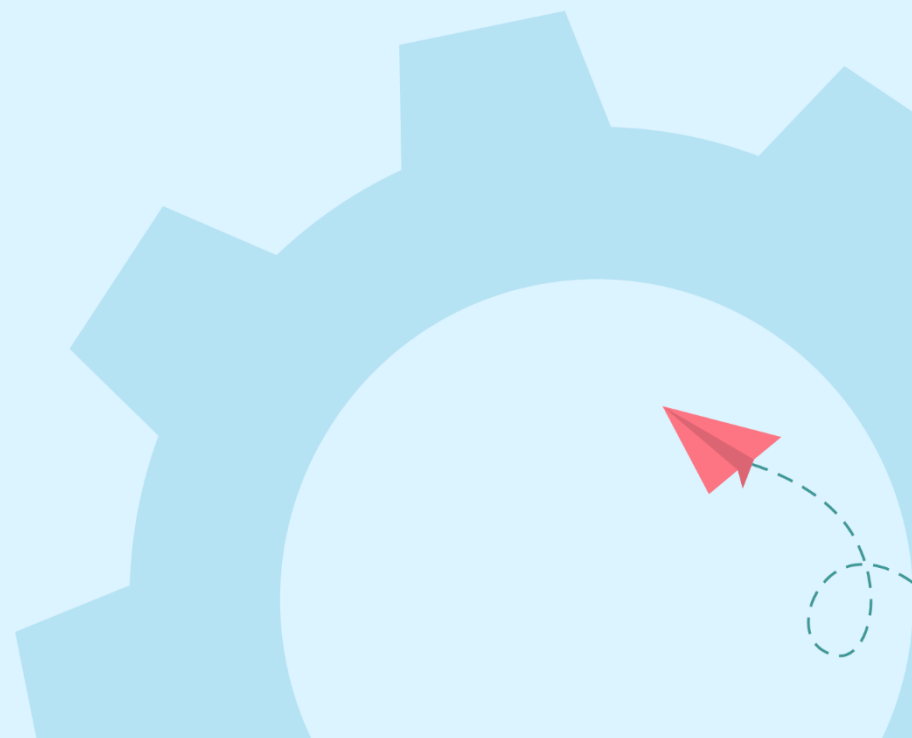
[Family Hubs and Start for Life – Help for Families](#)

[Durham Insights](#)

[Relationship Matters](#)

[Local Offer SEND](#)

[County Durham Family Outcome Framework](#)



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# Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Completion of this template allows us to provide a written record of our equality analysis and demonstrate due regard. It must be used as part of decision making processes with relevance to equality.

Please contact [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk) for any necessary support.

## Section One: Description and Screening

<b>Service/Team or Section</b>	Children and Young People Service, Early Help Inclusion and Vulnerable Children
<b>Lead Officer name and job title</b>	Karen Davison, Strategic Manager One Point Service, Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, Children and Young People’s Service
<b>Subject of the impact assessment</b>	County Durham’s Early Help Strategy 2024-2026
<b>Report date (Cabinet/CMT/Mgt team etc)</b>	Staring Well Partnership – 28/3/24 CYPST Business Meeting – 11/4/24 CMT – 15/4/24 Cabinet – 19/6/24
<b>MTFP Reference (if relevant)</b>	N/A
<b>EIA Start Date</b>	March 2023
<b>EIA Review Date</b>	March 2024

## Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice which is the subject of this impact assessment.
A review of the County Durham’s Strategic Partnership Approach 2019-2022 was undertaken to develop the new County Durham Early Help Strategy 2024-2026.  The new Strategy outlines a system wide approach to supporting County Durham children and families with early help needs. The Strategy describes County Durham’s vision for early help, how services supporting County Durham’s children and families will practice, their ‘approach’ in working with families, our shared

commitments, priorities, and measures of success that will be used to know if we have delivered on the Strategy.

Based on our current data and intelligence of children and family need, we will focus on the following priorities over the next three years:

- **We will promote children and young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing.** We will develop and implement a robust, graduated response to children and young people’s emotional wellbeing which ensures children, and their families are offered the right support at the right time. Support will focus on building resilience and promoting the 5 ways to wellbeing.
- **We will promote good school attendance.** We will support children to get the most out of their educational opportunities, especially those most disadvantaged, by attending school regularly.
- **We will co-produce and embed our Family Hub and Start for Life offer.** We will ensure that all babies and children have the best start in life by providing a robust support offer for families with children aged 0-19 years and 25 years with SEND. The Start for Life offer will focus on a robust universal and targeted offer from the early antenatal period through to a child reaching two years of age aimed at reducing inequalities both now and in the future.
- **We will promote healthy family relationships and protect children from the harm of domestic abuse.** We will offer a range of support aimed at promoting healthy family relationships from the antenatal period, through early years and into adulthood. We will provide support to families impacted by Domestic Abuse using a range of evidence-based interventions such as Domestic Abuse Recovery Together (DART), Inspire and Respect Young People’s Programme where CAPVA is a presenting issue.
- **We will promote positive and nurturing parenting.** We will promote positive and nurturing parenting, identify and address neglectful parenting at the earliest opportunity.
- **We will promote financial stability\*.** We will promote financial stability by ensuring all families have access to information and support to improve their financial wellbeing.

\*Post consultation changes were made to the priority to ‘promote financial stability’, to reflect the feedback of explicitly referencing supporting children’s aspirations into adulthood which would include those not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Who are the main people impacted and/or stakeholders? (e.g., general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users, community representatives):

County Durham’s children and families in receipt of early help support.

County Durham Families looking for early help support.

Partners from across the Early Help System who are committed to deliver on this new Strategy.

## Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure
Age	No	Yes
Disability	No	Yes
Gender reassignment	No	Yes
Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')	No	Yes
Pregnancy and maternity	No	Yes
Race	No	Yes
Religion or Belief	No	Yes
Sex	No	Yes
Sexual orientation	No	Yes

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause discrimination or negative impact. Record full details and any mitigating actions in section 2 of this assessment.

There are no identified actual or potential negative impacts for any of the protected characteristics, and the Early Help Strategy is inclusive of all children, parents and carers living in County Durham.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

Please provide **brief** details of positive impact. How will this policy/proposal promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

Implementation of the strategy will have a positive impact on a number of protected characteristics, for example, relating to age – the development of a network of Family Hubs will provide a range of local support and services to parents from pregnancy to children as they grow from babies into young adults. Also, relating to disability/SEND, including mental health and emotional wellbeing, children and families will be offered support that is accessible and delivered in a way which meets their needs. In terms of gender, the approach is likely to have a greater beneficial impact overall for women who are more likely to be the main carer in families. There are also specific targeted measures to improve the involvement of men (male carers and dads) which is positive.

County Durham’s Early Help Approach is founded on a relationship based culture, building valued and trusted relationships with families and amongst services and organisations supporting children and families. Our approach is to tailor support to individual families as all families are unique and this in turn underpins an inclusive approach.

## Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your data analysis and any findings?

Please **outline** any data you have and/or proposed sources (e.g., service user or census data, research findings). Highlight any data gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record your detailed analysis, in relation to the impacted protected characteristics, in section 2 of this assessment.

The new Early Help Strategy has undergone a robust 3 stage consultation.

**Stage 1:** involved coproduction sessions with children, parents, carers and partners via the Strategy Development Group to establish the vision for the strategy and the priority areas that the strategy should focus on.

16 different focussed workshops took place and consultation activities included work with the Youth Council, Family Hub Parent and Carer Panel, a range of children, families and parent/carers groups which incorporated children and parent/carers from different backgrounds via Voluntary and Community Sector groups, Youth Groups, One Point (LA Early Help Service), Harrogate District Foundation Trust (0-25 Family Health Service), Family Hubs, Gypsy Roma Traveller Communities and Harbour.



230 children and young people, parents, carers and partners participated in stage 1 of the consultation ranging from 6 years old to adults.

**Stage 2:** took place between October and December 2023 and involved the Prevention and Early Help Partnership and LA Senior Managers reviewing the feedback from stage 1 of the consultation. It was agreed that the 'approach' to early help for families, as identified above, needed to be accompanied with identified commitments and priorities for the next 3 years. The Prevention and Early Help Partnership commitments were already well understood due to the self-assessment that was undertaken as part of the National Supporting Families Programme in July 2023 using the Early Help Systems Guide.

**Stage 3:** consultation on the draft strategy with the general public and wider stakeholders, which ran from 19 January 2024 to 16 February 2024, via an online survey. The survey was promoted by stakeholders through their networks and channels established in stage 1 of the consultation and there were 76 responses to the on-line survey. Paper copies of the survey were also made available, and these responses are included in the 76.

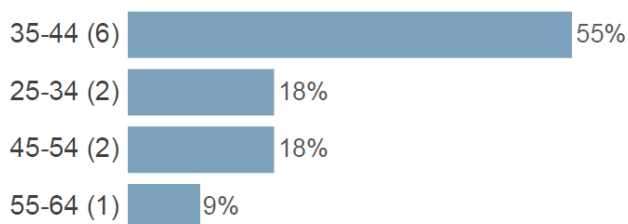
Below sets out analysis the survey participation and feedback (Stage 3 of consultation only) as broken down by Parent/Carers, Children and Young People, Members of the Family Hub Parent/Carer Panel and Professionals from across the Early Help System as follows:

### **Parent/Carer Responses**

11 Responses

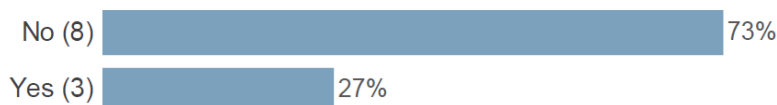
100% of female respondents to the on-line survey; however, Dad/Male Carer responses were obtained during stage 1 of the consultation and informed the first version of the proposed strategy.

#### **What is your age?**

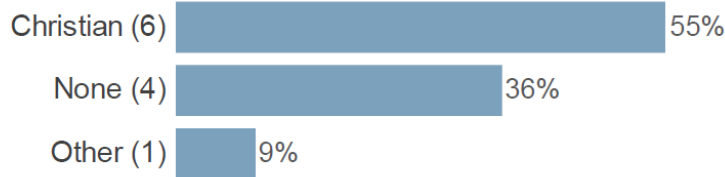


#### **Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

(This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day-to-day life. Long standing means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year).



### What is your religion or belief?



### What is your ethnicity?



### How would you describe your sexual orientation?



82% of Parent/Carers agreed with the vision and approach. The feedback from the 'approach' page of the strategy was that it was 'too wordy'. This has informed the final strategy and words were reduced where appropriate without losing meaning.

100% of Parents/Carers did not feel there was anything missing for the proposed 'approach' and 100% agreed with the commitments. 82% agreed there was nothing missing from the commitments however a couple of comments included the need to work with 'broken' families and to put more onus on parents/carers to take responsibility. The Strategy Development Group felt these comments were already addressed due to the Signs of Safety/Wellbeing practice approach and commitment to better engage with Dads/Male Carers.

100% of Parents/Carers agreed with the priorities and a couple of comments made to include diet/exercise and an acknowledgement that school attendance is an area of concern. Both of these comments are addressed by the strategy as school attendance is a priority and healthy lifestyles incorporated in the integrated Family Hub offer to families.

### **Children and Young People Responses**

Only 1 male young person completed the online survey. They regarded themselves as not having a disability, were Christian, White-British and chose not to provide a response to their sexual orientation.

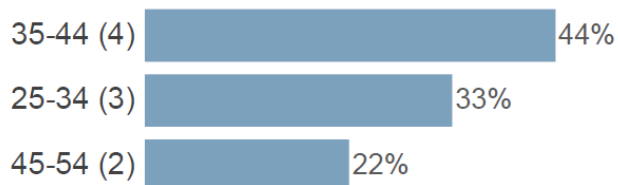
This young person agreed with the proposed Strategy vision, approach, commitments and priorities.

Albeit there was only 1 young person response, extensive consultation took place via stage 1 of the consultation process with a range of youth groups including the Youth Council, Youth Groups, Harrogate District Foundation Trust (0-25 Family Health Service) Youth Groups and Harbour Youth Group which informed the initial version of the new strategy which focussed on the vision and approach. Although the wording of the vision has changed to be more concise, it has not lost the essence of the original vision that young people contributed to the development of. The approach to the strategy, in essence and meaning, remains the same as what was developed by the range of Youth Groups that were consulted.

### **Members of the Family Hub Parent/Carer Panel**

9 responses to the on-line survey were made by Parent/Carer members of the Family Hub Parent/Carer Panel, 89% female and 11% male.

#### **What is your age?**



#### **Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

(This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day-to-day life. Long standing means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year).



#### **What is your religion or belief?**



#### **What is your ethnicity?**



#### **How would you describe your sexual orientation?**



100% of Family Hub Parent/Carer Panel Members agreed with the vision, 89% said that the approach was clear. Similarly, to the Parent/Carer responses above, there was a comment that some of the approach was 'too wordy' and as a result, where appropriate to avoid losing meaning, words have been reduced in the final strategy.

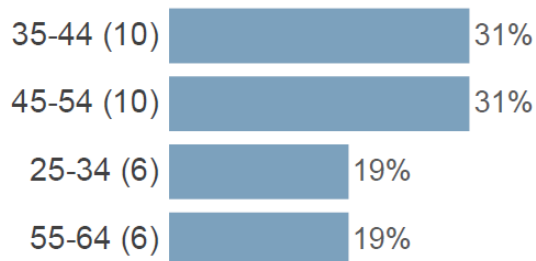
100% responded that there was nothing missing from the approach and 100% agreed with the commitments and priorities. There was one comment relating to 'breaking down barriers for school attendance', which the Strategy Development Group felt is addressed through the 'We will promote good school attendance' priority.

### **Professional from across the Early Help System**

There were a number of professional workshops which took place during Stage 1 and 2 of the Consultation which informed the draft Strategy that was consulted on in stage 3 of the consultation.

There were 36 responses to the on-line survey by professionals working across the Early Help System in stage 3 of the consultation. 84% were female and 16% male.

#### **What is your age?**



#### **Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

(This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day-to-day life. Long standing means it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year).



#### **What is your religion or belief?**




100% of those who responded to the following question regards themselves as White British. 14% (5) chose not to respond to this question.

**What is your ethnicity?**

White British (31)  100%

**How would you describe your sexual orientation?**

Heterosexual/straight (30)  97%

Gay or lesbian (1)  3%

100% of professionals who responded to the survey agreed with the vision. 94% agreed with proposed approach being clear however there were two comments stating they were 'too wordy' which is consistent to the other respondents and was addressed in the final strategy. 94% of professional respondents did not feel there was anything missing from the approach however there was a comment relating to the importance of prevention and educating children about the importance of good parenting in school. This was considered by the Strategy Development Group and felt that the Family Hub offer, and existing school curriculum adequately addresses this.

100% agreed with the commitments with a comment about strengthening the definition of Parental Conflict which has been addressed in the final strategy to provide clarity.

97% agreed with the priorities with one comment, mirroring that of other responses, regarding education for young people about how to be a good parent, which was addressed as outlined above. 78% did not feel that there was anything missing from the priorities. For those that did and left comments, these informed the final strategy and included:

- Where feedback referenced commitments and priorities not being SMART, there is a detailed delivery plan that underpins the Early Help Strategy therefore, to keep the strategy concise, the decision was made not to include timeframes other than the overarching 2024-2026 timeframe given for the strategy.
- 'Crime Prevention and Tackling Crime' (including anti-social behaviour) is one of the 10 Headline Outcomes within the County Durham Family Outcome Framework providing the partnership framework to evidence how effective the Early Help System is in supporting families achieve positive and sustained outcomes. This, coupled with the initial principles of how the development of the new strategy would be undertaken to avoid unnecessary duplication with other strategies, it was decided not to have 'reducing crime' as a key priority outlined in the Early Help Strategy albeit

the actions of the Prevention and Early Help Delivery Plan will contribute to this.

- References to supporting children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) were unchanged as it was felt that the Early Help Strategy 'approach' was inclusive of all children and families including those with SEND.
- Changes were made to the priority to 'promote financial stability', to reflect the feedback of explicitly referencing supporting children's aspirations into adulthood which would include those not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Within the Early Help 'approach' and within the Strategy's 'financial stability' priority, an emphasis was made on ensuring basic needs were met and what this could include e.g., food, warmth (fuel bills).
- Consideration was given to explicitly reference 'appropriate housing' in the Strategy however, due to a commitment to keep the strategy succinct and avoid duplication and for the same reasons outlined for not explicitly referencing crime and anti-social behaviour, it was felt that 'appropriate housing' is captured within the Family Outcome Framework under Headline Outcome 9, 'Secure Housing'.

The Strategy Development Group and Prevention and Early Help Partnership, who directed this review, feel the 3-stage consultation process was robust and feedback is a good reflection of the views across a range of parent, carers, children, young people and professionals.

### Screening Summary

On the basis of the information provided in this equality impact screening (section 1), are you proceeding to a full impact assessment (sections 2&3 of this template)?	Please confirm No
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### Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:  Karen Davison, Strategic Manager One Point Service, Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, CYPS	Date: 06/03/24
Equality representative sign off (where required):  Mary Gallagher, E&D Team Leader, Corporate Affairs	Date: 06/03/24

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to sections two and three.

If not proceeding to full assessment, please ensure your screening record is **attached to any relevant decision-making records or reports**, retain a copy for update where necessary, and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

If you are unsure of assessing impact please contact the corporate equalities team for further advice: [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

## Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details of impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g., benefits for certain groups and advancement of equality, as well as the negatives e.g., barriers or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions, including any necessary mitigating actions to ensure fair treatment.

Protected Characteristic: <b>Age</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to age?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Disability</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to disability?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Gender reassignment</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to gender reassignment?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Race</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to race?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Religion or belief</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to religion or belief?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: <b>Sex</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sex?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?



Protected Characteristic: <b>Sexual orientation</b>		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sexual orientation?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?

## Section Three: Conclusion and Review

### Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings; a summary of any positive and/or negative impacts across the protected characteristics, links to the involvement of different groups and/or public consultation, mitigations and conclusions made.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

### Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?

### Review and connected assessments

Are there any additional or connected equality impact assessments that need to be undertaken? (If yes, provide details)	
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When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	
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**Sign Off**

Lead officer sign off:	Date:
Equality representative sign off (where required):	Date:

**Please ensure:**

- **The findings of this EIA are carefully considered and used to inform any related decisions and policy development**
- **A summary of findings is included within the body of any relevant reports or decision-making records**
- **The EIA is attached to reports or relevant decision-making records and the report Implications Appendix 1 is noted that an EIA has been undertaken**

Please retain a copy for review and update where necessary, and forward a copy to [equalities@durham.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@durham.gov.uk)

**Cabinet**

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Update on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025**



**Ordinary Decision**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

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

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investment, and Assets**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Cabinet with an update on the developments in corporate asset management since it approved the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) 2023-2025 in April 2023, and to set out priorities for further improvements which will inform the development of the next iteration of the CAMP to be presented in 2025.

**Executive summary**

2. The size, shape and location of our land and property portfolio is vitally important to enabling the success of the council's ambitions. It provides space for the delivery of our public services; it helps create jobs, housing, and economic growth as well as income to invest in our services. The strategic management of this valuable resource in the context of broader objectives for the economy and the environment is important to the council and to the communities we serve.
3. In April 2023 Cabinet approved the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 which set out how the council will manage its estate and how it will be used to support the delivery of council services. The CAMP, in three parts, is to be developed further over the plan period and a new version will be produced in 2025.

4. The council's land and property estate changes continuously as we respond to new initiatives, the need to raise capital receipts, the need to improve the standard of our accommodation and the pressures on council resources. This report updates the baseline figures included in the published CAMP, both in terms of the estate statistics and the income and expenditure required to manage it. The CAMP excludes any transport and highway assets that are the subject of the separate Transport Asset Management Plan approved by Cabinet.
5. Apart from a significant housing acquisition programme, the size of the estate has remained fairly static over the past year. However, the amount of investment required to maintain and run an ageing estate continues to increase. This is a challenge for future asset management strategies.
6. Part 3 of the CAMP is the action plan which comprises a significant programme of activities to implement the Corporate Property Partnership (CPP) approach to asset management. This approach ensures that our property portfolio is managed and maintained consistently and corporately, allowing services to concentrate on their operational delivery.
7. Progress on delivering the activities in the action plan will be fundamental in the further development of the CAMP for 2025. This report sets out the progress made so far and the benefits that have been realised as a result.
8. In addition to the programme of activities that constitute the action plan, there are some broader themes of activity and review that will be incorporated into the next iteration of the CAMP. These include the potential changes to the council's corporate ambitions as well as adaptations to the way we work to accommodate business change. These factors have been summarised in the report.

## **Recommendation**

9. Cabinet is recommended to:
  - a) Note the changes in the estate metrics contained in paragraphs 16-22 and that this will be revisited for the 2025 CAMP;
  - b) Note the improvements achieved and the progress that has been made on the actions identified in the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 since its approval in April 2023;

- c) Note the areas for continued development of the CAMP which will be presented to Cabinet in 2025.

## Background

10. In April 2023 Cabinet received a report on the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023-2025 which is a strategic plan setting out how the property portfolio will support the council's corporate priorities and objectives, and which provides the direction for the ongoing management of the portfolio.
11. Members welcomed the plan and approved it for publication. It is available on the council's website and it forms part of the suite of strategic documents ensuring that the council fulfils its corporate duties and maximises benefits to the people of the county.
12. The purpose of the CAMP is to set out strategically how the council's property portfolio will support corporate priorities and objectives, and to provide direction for the ongoing management of the portfolio. It has three main sections:
  - a) The Asset Management Strategy which translates organisational objectives into property objectives.
  - b) The Asset Management Policy which sets out the rules and principles by which property assets must be managed.
  - c) The Asset Management Action Plan which is the delivery plan detailing activities or projects required to achieve the property objectives.
13. The CAMP action plan is aligned to the Corporate Property Partnership (CPP) programme which was established in 2019 to ensure that our property portfolio is managed and maintained consistently and corporately, allowing services to concentrate on their operational delivery.
14. The report in 2023 set out a number of key benefits that this corporate approach to asset management has already delivered. The main purpose of this report is to highlight further benefits and developments that have made a positive impact to the delivery of the property service and to outcomes for the council and the public it serves.
15. The 2023 report stated that the current CAMP would be subject to changes and refinement as the action plan is implemented and as it will need to reflect changes in working practices and corporate ambitions. These would be incorporated into the next iteration of the document in 2025. This paper identifies the key activities, in addition to those in the action plan, that will be important in the new document.

## The estate in context

16. The CAMP as published includes data on the size and make-up of the estate and this will be updated for the next version in 2025 as the estate is constantly changing. Schools are not included in the CAMP as the management of this part of the estate is primarily driven by the DfE's academisation strategies and pressures on school places nationally, especially in respect of SEND provision.
17. Included at Appendix 2 is an extract from the published CAMP showing the baseline data on the number of sites (NB not individual buildings on those sites) held for service delivery. Sites that have multiple services in occupation have been counted under the primary use of that site. Since the publication date there has been some minor fluctuation in the number of sites, those changes are set out in the table below:

<b>Property/site Type</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Industrial Sites	19	20	Lease in of terrace of industrial units at Station Place, Newton Aycliffe
Childrens Homes	11	14	Acquisition of Childrens Homes
Childrens Centres, One Point Hubs & Outreach	31	30	Change of function from Barnard Castle Outreach Centre to Adults Positive Journeys premises
Commercial/Retail Buildings	25	30	Re-classification of sites as part of the Commercial Review
Surplus Buildings	29	21	7 sales; 5 now operational; 4 new
Regeneration Sites	10	9	7 Atherton Street/Hopper House is now surplus
Community Buildings	56	55	Communal Room damaged beyond repair and demolished
Recreation Grounds with Buildings	43	41	2 structures reclassified to open space to match land they sit on
Housing acquired for Homeless Reduction Act duty	4	110	See para.19

18. An important piece of work in our CPP programme is the continuing categorisation of our estate into 'family types' – this will help us manage our property portfolio more effectively and to make informed and consistent decisions. Since the CAMP was produced last year, we have completed a 'deep dive' into our agricultural estate, the analysis of our commercial estate is almost complete, and we are about to commence work on reclamation sites. Analysis of each family type will result in improvements to baseline data, development of defined management approach for each category, and an understanding of key risks, issues and opportunities that may exist.
19. The total number of individual buildings across the whole (non-school) estate has increased from 893 to 961 which is largely due to the acquisition of local letting agency properties – these are properties which are used to address the council's statutory duty to support the needs of the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless required under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.
20. The total amount of land owned by the council has decreased from 9296 hectares (22,971 acres) to 9218 hectares (22,778 acres). This relatively marginal difference reflects numerous small-scale disposals and land acquisitions undertaken as part of the Stockton and Darlington Railway project. It is also due to the continuous data quality checks being undertaken by Corporate Property and Land where our GIS base (geographical information system or mapping software) is being checked and cross referenced against deeds and against results of valuation or condition survey programmes.
21. Other property related metrics will be updated for the CAMP 2025+ but, as an interim, the information from the published CAMP has been updated to the end of March 2023 unless otherwise stated:
  - a) Book value of assets is £0.99 billion as recorded in the draft accounts in March 2024 (£1.04 billion in 2022);
  - b) Annual rental income is £10.7 million (£9 million in 2022 – increases from rent reviews and new lettings);
  - c) Annual rental outgoings are £3.1 million (£2.5 million in 2022);
  - d) 763 new property management cases initiated from 1st April 2023 to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024;
  - e) Annual running costs £42 million (£34 million in 2022 – fuel and general repairs increases of £5.5 million and £1.4 million respectively);



- f) Capital receipt income from disposals completed during 2022/23 totalled £72.2 million. The large figure is principally as a result of the disposal of the former council's headquarters on The Sands in Durham City. With this individual sale excluded capital receipts from the other disposals completed that year totalled £2.2 million. Income from sales for 2023/24 is expected to total £3.1 million subject to a final end of year evaluation.
  - g) Non-school maintenance Backlog is £177 million of which 33% is classed as essential/urgent work (significant rise from £108 million in 2022 is mainly due to a review of the schedule of rates (costs/charges/inflation) allowed for repairs and maintenance).
22. The council's estate is managed strategically to maximise benefits, this includes the disposal programme, income generation, lease renewals, rent reviews etc. In summary, the number of properties retained for service delivery has remained fairly static over the last year but our residential estate has grown exponentially. This growth has had an impact on staff resources for both the acquisition process and for ongoing property maintenance. Although the core estate has not changed significantly, annual running costs (including energy costs and general repairs) have increased by approximately 25% and the backlog of required repairs continues to increase as the estate ages and deteriorates and as the baseline costs for maintenance continue to increase.
23. The backlog maintenance figure provided includes all backlog works, including those where a tenant may have responsibility under a lease agreement. Condition surveys are now carried out on buildings leased out, to understand issues throughout their lifespan and to ensure the council are aware of condition issues across the stock. Condition surveys on leased out buildings are not relied on for dilapidation claims but do provide the council with a picture of the condition whilst the building is under the direct management of a third party.
24. Continued programmes of capital investment and building surveys are employed to tackle the repairs backlog but all future property strategies that are developed will need to address this. This may be in the form of asset rationalisation, a new approach to works prioritisation or increased investment for example – or a blend of all of these. Other reports are being prepared to this effect, including one on maintaining safe assets and one which reviews our current repairs and maintenance service.

## Key progress with the CPP model to date

25. Since its publication last year, there has been significant progress made in the implementation of the CAMP action plan which will deliver our aim for a fully corporate approach to property asset management. The following is a list of some of the key achievements from April 2023 to March 2024 together with an outline of the benefits that have been derived from them.
26. Policy developments:
  - a) A new Buildings Security Policy (2024-2027) has been produced which aims to cohesively align security measures to potential risks and threats, with the goal of providing a safe and secure environment for those at work and those affected by our work activities. The principles have been utilised in the set up and management of Corten House and County Hall and it has led to new training and awareness programmes for all staff.
  - b) A new Marketing Strategy report template has been developed. It is being used to enable officers to strategically think about the best way to market our assets, when to market them, which agency tools to use such as method of sale, offering a guide price or not, timing of marketing, planning strategy and other relevant disposal related matters. Its use has improved communication across the council, helped consistency in working practices and it is catalyst for continued professional staff development.
  - c) The work of the Community Assets Steering Group has led to 10 expressions of interest from community groups, these have been followed up by the submission of 8 business cases. In total 5 full business cases are being considered by the group. One potential transfer of a play area to a Parish Council will see it brought back into full use with a possible investment locally of £75,000. The Steering Group have prioritised the development of a Community Asset Transfer Policy which is currently being finalised. The policy will provide the context and criteria by which the council will consider and implement the transfer of a community-based asset to a community organisation. This is in direct support to the council's commitment to the development and empowerment of communities.
  - d) Corporate Property and Land and Resources have been preparing for the implementation of IFRS 16 (International Financial Reporting Standard) which requires companies and

organisations to take a new approach to accounting for leases. To date, surveyors have cleansed and audited the council's lease data to ensure that all details required for IFRS 16 are captured, along with any additional detail that may assist with strategic property decisions along with the day-to-day operational side such as repair and maintenance liabilities etc. Over the longer term Corporate Property and Land will need to review the estate annually to ensure compliance along with facilitating the property valuations required. A Policy has been developed to set out the council's approach and the potential resource implications.

27. Property safety initiatives:

- a) In order to assess and address the risks associated with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the council's estate, over 1300 buildings have been surveyed (includes schools). A very small number of low-risk buildings are yet to be surveyed. No RAAC has been identified in any council buildings so no correctional works will be required.
- b) A review of radon gas risks and management across corporate property commenced in October 2023 to ascertain current levels of compliance and risk mitigation. Radon is a colourless, odourless, radioactive gas that occurs in rocks and soils, some building materials and water. Durham has many areas with high radon levels that are categorised as 'Radon Affected Areas.' The comprehensive radon management programme is testing circa 400 occupied premises, and all maintained schools. The council has worked closely with the United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to undertake testing and analysis. To date more than 150 test results have been returned with only one premise requiring action.
- c) Work is currently underway to ensure a rolling programme is formalised in relation to Reinstatement Cost Assessments, which are an insurance requirement. This will ensure that the information required to support the insurance and protection of council buildings is up to date and meets the changing requirements of our insurers. This will have cost and resource implications but it is necessary in order to protect the value of our buildings.
- d) The Vacant Property Working Group has overseen a project to review the arrangements for managing our current vacant/unoccupied estate with the aim of:

- i. Reviewing and challenging long term vacant sites
- ii. Updating risk management processes, including closer liaison with Police and Fire Services and with our insurance and compliance teams
- iii. Undertaking works to ensure vacant property is secure and receiving regular and appropriate inspections.

This work has helped reduce the number of vacant sites we hold and provided greater visibility of issues and consistency in vacant site management. The findings and outcomes of this project have been incorporated into a new Surplus Policy and into the action plan of ongoing improvements.

28. Improved joint/multi-agency working practices:

- a) To facilitate the review of the portfolio and manage land use conflicts across the council, the Land Use Change Working Group has been set up which comprises all service areas with an interest in land. The advantage of this group is that when a land use change is proposed, the group can review and discuss whether this use is suitable or if there are any conflicting potential uses which need consideration. Since its creation, the group has identified sites for uses including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), woodland planting, conversion of an unused playing pitch to a bio-diversity enhanced area and supported the change of use of agricultural land for residential development. This has had a positive influence on relationships between service areas who have been able to work collaboratively to resolve existing land management issues and make strategic recommendations surrounding the use of an asset.
- b) A Trespass Working Group has been established, which includes internal council officers and external representatives from the Police and Fire Services, with the aim of ensuring that council land is protected and that the people that use it are given the correct permission and that they accept the appropriate responsibilities. The multi-agency nature of the group is beneficial in dealing with many land related issues, not just trespass. Key activity to date is the production of a policy on commercial drone usage on council land together with the development of an Unauthorised Use of Council Land Policy to reduce encroachment on council land.
- c) A Landowners consent process has been developed to ensure a consistent approach to all proposals, by tenants or occupiers, to

carry out works on council owned properties. The process applies to schools/academies, commercial lettings and to community organisations and the type of work covered can include solar power installations, defibrillators, and CCTV systems, for example. This consent process is an important tool to enable the council to manage its estate, maintain accurate property records and it ensures that each party fulfils their legal responsibilities.

- d) In terms of team structures, the appointment of permanent Tier 4 managers to both the Strategy and Property Management Team and the Strategic Programmes Team have ensured that the objectives of both teams remain consistent with the overarching aims of the CAMP.

29. Major projects:

- a) Corporately, the capital investment budget outturn in 2023/23 was £143.05 million and officers across the team are instrumental in delivering this programme both in terms of construction and in land and property developments. Major projects that have been completed over the past year include:
  - i. The Story, a brand-new cultural venue and register office for Durham and the wider county. The project involved the restoration of a Grade II listed manor house and a contemporary, state-of-the-art extension.
  - ii. Corten House, new council administrative offices on the Aykley Heads estate which replaces County Hall. The building has been designed for energy efficiency and to support our workplace strategy by providing a wide range of working environments.
  - iii. Durham Bus Station, a modern transport hub that offers a safe and welcoming space for residents and visitors. It has increased space for passengers and new facilities including toilets, a changing places unit, improved information displays and additional seating in the passenger waiting area. It also has an office space where security, cleaning, neighbourhood warden staff, representatives from Durham Constabulary and Arriva, are based.
- b) The CAMP made a clear commitment to using our land and buildings to enable economic growth, celebrating our role as a key landowner and developer in the region:

- i. We are in the process of securing a delivery partner to work with the council on the development of land at Aykley Heads, which includes the former county hall site. It will provide a prime location for businesses to thrive and will form part of a wider innovation district which will bring together existing businesses and institutions with new land and opportunities.
- ii. NETPark is another successful model where the contribution of our assets and our leadership has supported opportunities to enhance and improve places and businesses in Sedgefield and the county as a whole. Over 40 successful businesses are operating in the area and the third phase of development is underway.
- iii. We are also currently seeking a development partner for our Durham city centre site at Claypath which will create economic, employment and leisure benefits for the city and add to the vibrancy of Millennium Place and its historic surroundings.
- iv. In addition to the income from sales reported earlier in this paper, the council's land has been disposed of to facilitate the building of new and affordable homes. Key amongst these developments are the former Roseberry College, land at Croft Street in Crook, self-build sites at Trinity Mews in Durham and the former Stanley School of Technology site. In 2023/24 the disposal programme facilitated 166 new homes and disposed of 4 vacant council buildings.
- v. Bishop Auckland Bus Station – the clearing of the existing site to enable the construction of a new bus station in Bishop Auckland has now commenced. This project has been made possible as a result of the successful bid to the governments Future High Street Fund. When completed a modern, fit for purpose bus station will support increasing visitor numbers and provide a welcoming and positive experience for public transport users.
- vi. Council House Building Programme – In October 2020, the council agreed to begin a council house building programme of up to 500 homes by 2026. In July 2023, Cabinet approved an updated business case for the council house delivery programme which included an updated financial model. This reflected updated assumptions and

forecast that the Housing Revenue Account is financially viable, without additional capital investment (other than land). A number of council owned sites have been allocated to the council house delivery programme. A main contractor has been appointed to construct the homes and deliver the sites. The July 2023 Cabinet report identified that for the initial stage of the programme, three sites would be identified for delivery which would be expected to deliver c.51 dwellings.

- vii. DLI Museum and Art Gallery – Cabinet agreed to reopen the DLI museum as a community asset and visitor destination and planning permission was confirmed in February 2023. Work is currently underway on site with the existing building to be refurbished and expanded to include an exhibition space, gallery, and café.

## **External Feedback**

- 30. Corporate Property and Land have been working with all services across the council to implement the CPP model over a number of years now and the success of the ‘Durham model’ for Corporate Landlord is being highlighted through external feedback being received. Some examples of this are listed in the following paragraphs.
- 31. The CAMP itself has been referred to as “an example of a good approach to Asset Management documentation” at a recent regional CIPFA Asset Management event, with Durham highlighted specifically to delegates during the event. It has also been recognised by a leading property consultancy as “well-structured and containing many of the elements we would expect to see in a high-quality CAMP.”
- 32. As a reflection of this Middlesbrough Council are using the Durham CAMP as the basis for their new CAMP, as they feel it is a good practice example and contains various elements that are well structured and beneficial for their requirements.
- 33. North Tyneside Council (NTC) recently met with Corporate Property and Land, Planning and Housing and Economic Development to discuss Durham’s approach to listing, management, disposal, and reuse of heritage assets. NTC requested this as they recognise Durham’s approach to good practice which has been developed through a collaboratively and facilitated through governance established by the CPP.

34. Development of improved policies and processes are also key to CPP success and external auditors have used Durham’s approach to disposal as an example for other councils to utilise.

**CAMP 2025 Review**

35. In addition to the continued activity to deliver the CPP action plan and realise the benefits this brings to the management of our assets, we need to ensure that the next iteration of the CAMP, to be delivered in 2025, reflects wider corporate change and our developing strategic objectives.
36. A brief summary of the work we will be doing to capture this is set out in the table below:

<p><b>Asset Management Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establishment of a vision statement for our estate</li> <li>▪ Review of Council Plan objectives</li> <li>▪ Engagement with and assessment of corporate strategies (Economic Strategy / Ecological Emergency / CE Devolution Statement / etc)</li> <li>▪ Ensuring a link between these strategic objectives and specific goals in the CAMP</li> <li>▪ Set out associated baselines and high-level targets as an introduction to performance measures</li> <li>▪ Develop the performance management regime for the service and the estate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Asset Management Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revisit and reinforce key principles</li> <li>▪ Reflect on the actions/change over the plan period and assess impact rules/culture/behaviour</li> <li>▪ Further development of governance, decision making, structure, resourcing issues, and information systems – review of how Corporate Property and Land work with others in the organisation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Asset Management Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review action plan activities and priorities</li> <li>▪ Link actions and achievements to outcomes / targets / trends</li> <li>▪ Continued development of portfolio statistics and analysis</li> </ul>



## **Conclusion**

37. In the year since the CAMP was endorsed and published there have been changes to the make-up of the estate, progress with the implementation of the action plan that will deliver the CPP model, and careful consideration of the work that still needs to be done to ensure that the next iteration of the CAMP, due in 2025, continues to support our corporate objectives and priorities.

## **Background papers**

None

## **Other useful documents**

None

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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### **Legal Implications**

No implications.

### **Finance**

There will be financial and resource implications arising from the further work to develop and implement the Corporate Asset Management Plan. These will be presented and considered as appropriate and with reference to MTFP requirements.

### **Consultation**

Engagement will be ongoing involving a wide group of stakeholders.

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

No implications.

### **Climate Change**

The Corporate Asset Management Plan will reflect the Council's commitment to carbon reduction/neutrality.

### **Human Rights**

No implications.

### **Crime and Disorder**

No implications.

### **Staffing**

There may be changes to working practices and resource implications arising from the further development and implementation of the Corporate Asset

Management Plan. These resource implications will be considered as part of the CAMP implementation.

### **Accommodation**

No implications at this stage, although the implementation of the CAMP is likely to result in changes to the property portfolio. Changes to the portfolio will be subject to option appraisal and corporate approval processes and governance.

### **Risk**

None at this stage.

**Procurement**

None at this stage.

## Appendix 2: Extract from CAMP 2023-2025 – sites held for service delivery



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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