

Public Document Pack



Northumberland County Council

Your ref:

Our ref:

Enquiries to: Lesley Little

Email: Lesley.Little@northumberland.gov.uk

Tel direct: 01670 622614

Date: Tuesday 24 August 2021

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF TIME

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held in the Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on **THURSDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 9.00 AM.**

Yours faithfully

Daljit Lally
Chief Executive

To Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee members as follows:-

C Ball, W Daley (Chair), L Dunn, D Ferguson, A Scott, G Stewart (Vice-Chair), M Swinburn, C Taylor and T Thorne

Any member of the press or public may view the proceedings of this virtual meeting live on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV>. Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc during the live broadcast as they would be able to during a regular Committee meeting.

Members are referred to the risk assessment, previously circulated, for meetings held in County Hall. Masks should be worn when moving around but can be removed when seated, social distancing should be maintained, hand sanitiser regularly used and members requested to self test twice a week at home, in line with government guidelines.



Daljit Lally, Chief Executive
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
T: 0345 600 6400
www.northumberland.gov.uk



AGENDA

PART I

It is expected that the matters included in this part of the agenda will be dealt with in public.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)
3. **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required to disclose any personal interest (which includes any disclosable pecuniary interest) they may have in any of the items included on the agenda for the meeting in accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 4 July 2012, and are reminded that if they have any personal interests of a prejudicial nature (as defined under paragraph 17 of the Code Conduct) they must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room. NB Any member needing clarification must contact the monitoring officer by email at monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.
4. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS** (Pages 7 - 12)

To note the latest Forward Plan of key decisions for September to December 2021. Any further changes made to the Forward Plan will be reported to the committee.
5. **SCHOOLS FORUM ROLE AND DECISION MAKING POWERS** (Pages 13 - 32)

The report provides Members with further information about the role of the Schools Forum, including its powers, consultative role and the impact of this in relation to School Funding in Northumberland for 2021/22.
6. **SEND REVISIT MAY 2021** (Pages 33 - 36)

The report informs Members of the findings of the SEND Revisit from Ofsted and CQC and outlines next steps to be taken.
7. **PEER REVIEW FOR CARE LEAVERS SERVICE-UPDATE REPORT** (Pages 37 - 40)

The report provides Members with an update of the actions to be undertaken following the Peer Challenge undertaken in September 2018 including a current view of the offer for care leavers in Northumberland.
8. **COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021 - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, AND CONTINUING HEALTH CARE SERVICES** (Pages 41 - 78)

The report informs the Committee of the activities of the Adult Services and Children's Social Care complaints service, including work on behalf of the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group; customer experiences; complaints handling and decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

- 9. FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2021/22** (Pages 79 - 86)

Members are asked to review and note the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report.

- 10. URGENT BUSINESS**

IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:

- Declare it and give details of its nature before the matter is discussion or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- Complete this sheet and pass it to the Democratic Services Officer.

Name (please print):
Meeting:
Date:
Item to which your interest relates:
Nature of Registerable Personal Interest i.e either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Annex 2 to Code of Conduct or other interest (as defined by Annex 3 to Code of Conduct) (please give details):
Nature of Non-registerable Personal Interest (please give details):
Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?

1. Registerable Personal Interests – You may have a Registerable Personal Interest if the issue being discussed in the meeting:

a) relates to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined by Annex 1 to the Code of Conduct); or

b) any other interest (as defined by Annex 2 to the Code of Conduct)

The following interests are Disclosable Pecuniary Interests if they are an interest of either you or your spouse or civil partner:

(1) Employment, Office, Companies, Profession or vocation; (2) Sponsorship; (3) Contracts with the Council; (4) Land in the County; (5) Licences in the County; (6) Corporate Tenancies with the Council; or (7) Securities - interests in Companies trading with the Council.

The following are other Registerable Personal Interests:

(1) any body of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management) to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council; (2) any body which (i) exercises functions of a public nature or (ii) has charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purpose includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member (or in a position of general control or management); or (3) any person from whom you have received within the previous three years a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of more than £50 which is attributable to your position as an elected or co-opted member of the Council.

2. Non-registerable personal interests - You may have a non-registerable personal interest when you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are, or ought reasonably to be, aware that a decision in relation to an item of business which is to be transacted might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well being or financial position, or the well being or financial position of a person described below to a greater extent than most inhabitants of the area affected by the decision.

The persons referred to above are: (a) a member of your family; (b) any person with whom you have a close association; or (c) in relation to persons described in (a) and (b), their employer, any firm in which they are a partner, or company of which they are a director or shareholder.

3. Non-participation in Council Business

When you attend a meeting of the Council or Cabinet, or one of their committees or sub-committees, and you are aware that the criteria set out below are satisfied in relation to any matter to be considered, or being considered at that meeting, you must : (a) Declare that fact to the meeting; (b) Not participate (or further participate) in any discussion of the matter at the meeting; (c) Not participate in any vote (or further vote) taken on the matter at the meeting; and (d) Leave the room whilst the matter is being discussed.

The criteria for the purposes of the above paragraph are that: (a) You have a registerable or non-registerable personal interest in the matter which is such that a member of the public knowing the relevant facts would reasonably think it so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest; **and either** (b) the matter will affect the financial position of yourself or one of the persons or bodies referred to above or in any of your register entries; **or** (c) the matter concerns a request for any permission, licence, consent or registration sought by yourself or any of the persons referred to above or in any of your register entries.

This guidance is not a complete statement of the rules on declaration of interests which are contained in the Members' Code of Conduct. If in any doubt, please consult the Monitoring Officer or relevant Democratic Services Officer before the meeting.

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NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At the meeting of the **Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at Meeting Space - Block 2, Floor 2 - County Hall on Thursday, 17 June 2021 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

W Daley (Chair) (in the Chair)

MEMBERS

C Ball
G Stewart
C Taylor

L Dunn
M Swinburn
T Thorne

OTHER COUNCILLORS

G Renner-Thompson

OFFICERS

C Angus
S Aviston
R Greally
A Kingham
L Little
C McEvoy-Carr

Scrutiny Officer
Head of School Organisation and Resources
Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Service Director - Education and Skills
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Executive Director of Adults and Children's Services
Service Director - Children's Social Care
Head of Inclusive Education Services

1 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

A copy of the Membership and Terms of Reference for the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Meeting had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chair provided a welcome to the first meeting of the Committee and introductions were made by all those present.

C McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services provided a presentation which gave a comprehensive overview of Children's Services.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Ferguson and A Scott along with A Hodgson and L Houghton.

3 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 1 April, 2021, as circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chair.

4 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan of key decisions for July to October 2021 be noted.

5 **SUMMARY OF NCC APPROACHES TO MEETING THE NEEDS OF SEND LEARNERS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC MARCH 2020- MARCH 2021**

A comprehensive introduction to the report which provided information for the Committee on how the Council responded to the Covid pandemic in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND), was provided by N Taylor, Head of Inclusive Education Services.

G Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services commended the report advising that all staff involved had worked extremely hard to ensure the best outcomes for all children and young people. This was reiterated by the Committee.

There had been an increase in demand for services, especially around autism support and emotional wellbeing and behaviour, these services had become free at the point of delivery last year to improve equity which stood the Council in good stead during the pandemic period and also in terms of moving forward, allowing needs led delivery of support rather than relying on the availability of individual school's resources. Work continues in terms of reviewing the capacity of these support teams in particular. The number of statutory assessment requests continues to increase; this also leads to the need to keep capacity of the relevant teams under review, and to continue to work with schools to ensure consistent provision for children and young people with SEND. The Executive Director advised there was an increase in demand across all service areas within Children's Services and this would need to be looked at in a strategic manner. The Council was continuing to develop the working relationship with the CCG and there would be a better ability to predict some need and it would be a challenge but the Council would continue to try to adapt the resources available to meet the needs. Some innovative approaches had been introduced to meet immediate and medium term needs working with schools as the quickest way to meet demand. A number of colleagues from schools were being seconded to the Service to strengthen the resource in the short term, thus recognising the expertise there was in schools. Medium term plans would also add capacity. Assurance was provided that the Service understood the needs going forward, and sought regular opportunities to understand the needs of schools in support of

learners with SEN.

In response to a question regarding the learners who were not attending school, assurance was provided that monitoring was undertaken by the Education Welfare Team with comprehensive tracking and constant contact with the young people, families and schools taking place to build attendance back up with referrals to relevant services if required. Going forward the virtual offer around training in schools would remain, as attendance had been very good. A virtual support would remain for some students, on site visits to learners and schools had now been reinstated.

Concern was expressed regarding impacts the pandemic had on mental health as were outlined in the report however the Members recognised and commended the work being undertaken in respect of this. The current waiting time for primary mental health and CYPS was 4 weeks to treatment, which was radically reduced from 2 years ago, however referrals to school health took longer and work was being undertaken with the CCG to find solutions including working with the voluntary sector. Referrals to the Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support Team had been kept open until the end of term with responses being provided in two to three weeks. Members were referred to the Covid parent/carer survey available online which provided some honest comments and feedback from families of children and young people with SEND about their experiences of the first national lockdown and its impact on them. The Executive Director commented there were a number of ways to access services at a lower level before being referred to CYPS with a number of services being available at the level of early intervention but advised that it was important to understand the pathway and whether there was an emotional or behavioural issue or it was a mental health issue.

The Chair echoed points made by a number of Members in relation to the huge gratitude to all staff within schools for the work they have carried out, during the pandemic. He advised that the Council would provide evidence to the Public Inquiry on Covid on the positive impact that local authorities could have.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and the support provided over this period be recognised.

6 WINTER SUPPORT GRANT UPDATE

The report provided updated information regarding delivery of the Winter Support Grant during Spring Term 2021, including the provision of Free School Meals (FSM) over the February half-term and Easter school holidays and the roll-out of the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) at Easter. S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources presented the report to the Committee with Councillor Renner-Thompson stating that the Council had been keen to use the voucher system following initial criticism of the quality of the food parcels in some neighbouring authorities and that the use of the HUGGG vouchers had been very successful within Northumberland. Some FSM funding had also been disseminated via local arrangements. Data was not yet available for the Summer half term as the vouchers, valued at £20 per pupil per week, were still live.

In response to a question regarding the uptake of the vouchers it was clarified

that data had shown that Northumberland had the highest uptake in the Country of those using the voucher system however due to the way the system worked there was a lag in the data related to families moving between different benefits and there were other families whose circumstances had changed and they no longer required the vouchers. The Co-op IT systems had not been able to accept the HUGGG vouchers and therefore gift cards purchased by the Council had been provided to some families to allow them to access the support. Whilst schools had contact information for children and therefore the vouchers had been able to be provided directly to families, in some post 16 settings the vouchers had been provided directly to students and therefore it had been more of a challenge to get the same level of uptake, therefore different ways of providing funding were being looked at for these students in the future.

The holiday activities had been targeted to those receiving FSM, however they had been opened more widely but there was a challenge to manage the numbers accessing the activities. E Richardson, Senior Manager Specialist Services would be asked to provide more information to Councillor Ball on this. Information would also be requested from the Communities Together Hub on the breakdown of discretionary funding provided in respect of utility bills etc.

A campaign had been run to promote to encourage parents to apply for FSM and whilst numbers had increased, these had now plateaued. The promotion of FSM was also part of the standard consultation strategy in schools as FSM also brought in funding for the schools themselves. Work would continue to get the best uptake of FSM. Reconciliation of the Government grant was now taking place, but it was expected that this had been spent in full and no funding would be returned to the Government.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report and the successful implementation of the initiatives undertaken with the funding from the Winter Support Grant be noted.
2. The strategy, roll-out and benefits of the activities for children and young people organised through the Holiday Activity Fund across Northumberland during the Easter Holiday be noted.

7 FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2019/20.

Members were reminded to contact the Chair or the Scrutiny Officer with any items that they would like to be added to the work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that he was working with Human Resources and the Centre for Scrutiny to provide some training for Members on scrutiny and how to deliver effective scrutiny. Once details were known information would be provided to Members and they were encouraged to sign up for the training. The Chair stated he was keen for the Committee to be Member driven and highlighted the work undertaken by Councillor Swinburn and the Exclusions Task and Finish Working Group which had a transformation effect on the level of exclusions in the County.

In response to a question in relation to the Northumberland College and a potential new build by the DfE, the Executive Director advised that a report could be provided to the Committee in due course

The Chair advised that the meeting in September would start at 9 am to accommodate another meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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Forward Plan

FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2021

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p>Draft Private Housing Sector Strategy 2020-23 The report provides Members with the draft Private Sector Housing Strategy 2020-2023 for review and agreement. (C. Horncastle/ J. Stewart 01670 623076 / 07771 974 112)</p>	C&P 4 August 2021	7 September 2021
<p>Enterprise Zone – NEP1 – Investor Proposal The purpose of this report is to enable the Cabinet to make a decision in respect of entering into the proposed project with Investor A which includes the significant inward investment and entering into a long term strategic partnership. (Cllr W. Ploszaj/C. Johns-McLeod – 01670 623875)</p>		7 September 2021
<p>The Northumberland Line To provide members with an update on the scheme development and approvals process for the Northumberland Line project. Members will be asked to confirm elements of project scope and the anticipated spend profile (inc. NCC and external funding). (W. Ploszaj / Stuart McNaughton - 07827 873139)</p>	CSEG 6 September 2021	7 September 2021
<p>Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan To seek approval to formally 'make' the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent</p>	N/A	7 September 2021

<p>examination in May 2021. A local referendum held in the Parish of Seaton Valley on 29 July 2021 returned a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council is now obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations. (C. Horncastle/S. Branningan – 107966 335508)</p>		
<p>Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23</p> <p>Since 1 April 2013 the Council is required to have its own council tax support scheme to provide assistance to council tax payers on low incomes. The scheme needs to be approved annually and assistance is by way of a reduction in the amount of council tax that is due.</p> <p>The Council Tax Support Scheme needs County Council approval. (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes 01670 624351)</p>	<p>CSEG 11 October 2021</p>	<p>12 October 2021 Council 3 November 2021</p>
<p>Northumberland Waste Management Strategy – Outcome of Kerbside Glass Recycling Trial</p> <p>To report the key outcomes of the kerbside glass recycling pilot scheme which has been in operation since November 2020 and to recommend the next steps for this scheme and the estimated costs for rolling-out a kerbside glass collection service across the county. The report will also highlight how the roll-out and timing for this enhanced glass recycling service will be dependent upon the outcome of the latest consultation exercises undertaken as part of the Government’s new Resources and Waste Strategy and</p>	<p>C&P 6 October 2021</p>	<p>12 October 2021</p>

<p>provision of new burdens funding by the Government. (J. Riddle/ P. Jones 01670 623432)</p>		
<p>Energising Blyth Programme (Energy Central Campus) This report seeks to update Cabinet and seek key decisions regarding arrangements to support the development and establishment of the Energy Central Campus. This project is one of the priority schemes in the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. (W. Ploszaj /R. Strettle – 07770642773)</p>	<p>CSEG 11 October 2021</p>	<p>12 October 2021</p>
<p>Integrated Domestic Abuse Services for Northumberland – Permission to Tender To seek Cabinet’s permission to go to the market to commission a range of services to enable the Local Authority to meet the duties of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (W. Pattison/ Lesley Pyle - (01670) 622724)</p>	<p>TBC</p>	<p>12 October 2021</p>
<p>School Organisation Plan 2021-2024 This report asks Cabinet and FACS to note the second iteration of the School Organisation Plan 2021-2024 for Northumberland, the first iteration being for 2018-2021. The report also asks Cabinet to approve the circulation of the plan to schools and academies for information and feedback prior to its subsequent publication. The report asks Cabinet and FACS to note that School Organisation Plans are no longer required statutorily. However, Cabinet approval was given to publish a School</p>	<p>FACS 7 October 2021</p>	<p>12 October 2021</p>

<p>Organisation Plan for Northumberland in 2018 in order to provide schools, parents, partner organisations and interested parties with an overview of the school system in the county and to highlight trends, plans and potential proposals in relation to schools. This latest version of the plan covers the period 2021 to 2024, but it will be subject to annual update in order to capture changing information or circumstances relating to schools and academies as appropriate. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston – 01670 622281)</p>		
<p>Education Infrastructure Contribution Policy This report asks Cabinet and FACS to note the update of the Education Infrastructure Contribution Policy. The policy was first approved by Cabinet in 2017 but has not been updated due to proposals by Planning Services to create an authority-wide contributions policy and by Government to overhaul the current system of securing developer contributions, neither of which have as yet been implemented.</p> <p>However, the report ostensibly requests Cabinet’s approval to increase the amount of contribution requested within the policy from developers in relation to Special Educational Needs infrastructure in order to reflect that the percentage of the population of school-age students in Northumberland with complex needs has risen from 3% to 4% since 2017. Cabinet and FACS are also asked to note that some minor non-material amendments have also been made to update the policy. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston – 01670 622281)</p>	<p>FACS 7 October 2021</p>	<p>12 October 2021</p>
<p>Transfer of redundant public toilet to Newbiggin Town</p>		<p>12 October 2021</p>

<p>Council To seek a resolution on the recommendation of the Local Area Council in response to a petition on the proposed transfer of a redundant public toilet building to Newbiggin Town Council (J. Riddle/G. Gavin – 07500127242)</p>		
<p>Approval of the Council Tax Base 2022/23 The Council is required to set its council tax base annually. The tax base must be set between the 1st of December and 31st January. The tax base is a measure of the Council's taxable capacity which is used for the setting of its council tax. Legislation sets out the formula for calculation. Cabinet has delegated authority to approve the tax base. (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes 01670 624351)</p>	<p>CSEG 6 December 2021</p>	<p>7 December 2021</p>

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Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 2nd September 2021

Schools Forum Role and Decision Making Powers

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services.

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member for Children's Services.

Report Author Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources

Purpose of Report

To provide FACS with further information about the role of the Schools Forum, including its powers, consultative role and the impact of this in relation to School Funding in Northumberland for 2021/22.

Recommendations

FACS OSC are recommended to:

- 1) Note the content of the report.

Key issues

1. National Regulations govern the operation of schools forums. These were updated in 2020 by [The Schools Forum \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#) to allow schools forums to meet remotely. Prior to this, [The Schools Forums\(England\) Regulations 2012](#) had been the latest regulations published.
2. The Schools' Forum, generally has a consultative role, with final decisions being made by the Cabinet, or a senior officer and Cabinet member under delegated powers. The 2021/22 School Funding report brought to Cabinet on 12 January 2021 sought delegated powers for final decisions to be made on behalf of the Council by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
3. Schools Forum usually meets 5 times a year. Historically meetings have been held at County Hall but the Covid-19 situation resulted in specific legislation being introduced to allow the Schools Forum to meet remotely via video conference since March 2020. Given Schools Forum membership ranges from Berwick to Kielder, this has proved popular, with members of forum and we are exploring how meetings can be facilitated to include remote access on an ongoing basis.
4. The Schools Forum also has 2 sub-committees. High Needs, which looks at specific issues in relation to the high needs block that is used to fund services and special, independent school and alternative provider places. The second committee is the Funding Formula committee which looks in detail and make recommendations to forum around the funding formula values to be adopted in Northumberland.
5. One of the key issues for consideration by Schools Forum has been the implementation of the National Funding Formula (NFF) in Northumberland. It should be remembered that the vast majority of formula values used by Northumberland for the distribution of School Funding for 2021/22 are in line with NFF Values as shown in the table at Appendix One.
6. While the Government have said that for 2021/22 school funding formula values will be still determined at individual local authority level, the move to a "hard" formula (i.e. where the formula values are centrally determined) could be effective from 2022/23. Where Northumberland values differ from NFF this is generally due to previous precedents, for example Northumberland has historically paid higher AWPU levels than those introduced in the NFF but will be unable to do so under a hard formula. It has therefore been necessary to move towards NFF values over the previous three years in order to manage a smooth transition to NFF and minimize the risk of significant changes to individual school budgets under the NFF.
7. The key points for consideration in relation to Funding Formula values for 2021/22 is therefore in relation to those NCC values that remain different to NFF rates.

These are:

- Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) – Primary;
- Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) – Secondary KS4;
- Primary Low Prior Attainment; and
- Free School Meals (Primary and Secondary)

The respective Northumberland (NCC) and National Funding Formula (NFF) values are shown below:

<u>COMPARISON OF 2021/22 NORTHUMBERLAND (NCC) FORMULA VALUES TO NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA (NFF)</u>				
Formula Value:	Stage	NCC Value	NFF Value	Difference
AWPU	Primary	3154	3123	31
AWPU	KS4	5064	4963	101
Low Prior Attainment	Primary	840	1095	-255
Free School Meals	Primary	570	460	110
Free School Meals	Secondary	570	460	110

- The Schools Forum has also been consulted on the work undertaken on the sparsity element within the NFF over the last couple of years. The sparsity element targets extra funding to schools that are both small and remote, using criteria based on the average year group size and the distance a pupil would have to travel to its nearest compatible school. Sparsity is a comparatively small element within the NFF, which in 2020/21 accounts for £42 million nationally of the total Schools Block Budget of £38,916 million but is important to Northumberland as a county due to its size and relatively high number of small rural schools.
- For 2020/21 we argued that the “as the crow flies” distances used to measure pupil distances was not appropriate and submitted a request that road distances were instead used in the distribution of sparsity funding, as this would have resulted in a further 6 schools being eligible.
- The overall funding received by Northumberland in relation to Sparsity has also increased significantly for 2021/22:
 - 2020/21 £1.883 million;
 - 2021/22 £2.602 million.
- While the ESFA have not yet adopted road distances measures, earlier in 2021 they have formally consulted on this for 2022/23 and we await the results of this consultation.
- Following the report submitted to Cabinet on 12 January 2021, the Schools

Budget Shares were prepared on the basis of this, shared with Schools Forum on 24 February 2021 and circulated to all Schools ahead of the 28 February 2021 deadline. FACS also requested a copy of the final allocation of funding to individual schools. A copy is attached at Appendix Two.

13. You will note that Appendix One also contains academies within Northumberland, even though they are funded directly by the ESFA. Academies are funded on the same principles as maintained Schools and using the same formula values, the key difference being that they operate on an academic year basis (Sept- Aug) rather than financial years (Apr -Mar).

De-delegation

14. The Schools Forum as a schools representative body take decisions on de-delegation on behalf of maintained schools. De-delegation is the process by which Schools Forum members, on behalf of maintained primary and secondary schools can decide collectively to “buy back” certain services, from a list of 20 possible services as allowed by the ESFA.
15. De-delegation is an integral part of the way in which these services are funded, and any changes would require a significant change to the way of working with schools. Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate from all phases during all years since 2013/14 when the de-delegation regime was first introduced. Cash values have been frozen at the same value per pupil as in 2020/21 for all de-delegated budgets, to support schools and their budgetary pressures. Over recent years, this has seen a fall in the overall funding available via de-delegation as the number of maintained schools decreases due to academisation. Academies are however able to access these services through buying in via a Service Level Agreement.
16. Historically five services have received a contribution via de-delegation, however it was agreed for 2021/22 that Behaviour Support Services is funded via the High Needs block, not de-delegation for 2021/22, as this is closely aligned to SEN services and in line with the new Northumberland Inclusive Education Services (NIES) offer, effective from September 2020, which has removed charges for the majority of SEN services (except Education Psychology) so that access is determined on the basis of need, not the ability to pay.
17. De-delegated funding was therefore formally requested and agreed by the relevant schools forum members in respect of the following 4 services:

Service	2021/22 Estimate (£)	Deduction per eligible pupil
Contingency Fund for School Restructure and Re-organisation costs	345,088	£20
Determination of FSM Eligibility	20,767	£6 per FSM pupil

English as an Additional Language (EAL) services	34,597	£220 per EAL pupil
Trades Union Facility Time	56,077	£3.25
TOTAL :	456,529	

18. One factor in maintained schools continuing support for de-delegation may be the decision made in Feb 2021 to return unspent balances to schools. Due to reduced amount of re-organisation activity in 2020/21, a paper was taken to Schools Forum in February 2021 to inform them that the Contingency Fund deduction was to be refunded to schools, this returned a total of £344,538.33 to maintained schools in March 2021, prior to the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

Additional Support to Schools from Northumberland County Council Covid Funding

19. Although not directly linked to the decisions of schools forum it is also worth mentioning the additional financial support given to schools which have faced exceptional expenditure pressures, as a result of the pandemic. 115 schools and academies have also received additional financial support from the Council's Covid Funding.
20. In order to make claim for funding schools had to satisfy a number of conditions to qualify for funding, e.g,
- the expenditure had to be necessarily incurred for the school to remain open;
 - the expenditure was not eligible to be recovered via an alternative funding source e.g the ESFA or insurance cover;
 - School were not holding balances in excess of 10% of their annual income;
21. This was to ensure support was targeted specifically at schools who had incurred unforeseeable additional costs arising from covid, and not simply a case of increasing school balances.
22. There were two separate claim programmes in respect of this, one relating to staffing costs and subsequently one for non-staff costs. Payments totaling £342,536 have been made to schools in respect of Staffing costs, and to date non-staff claims of £349,841 have been agreed.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The decision of schools forum are made in line with national policy guidance relating to schools funding.
Finance and value for money:	The report sets out the funding values and process's undertaken to agree how revenue funding with be distributed to all schools and academies across Northumberland.
Legal:	Potential Changes in future as and when legislation governing the operation of Schools Forums changes
Procurement:	None.
Human Resources:	None
Property:	None
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment:	The operation of the Forum will continue to be monitored to ensure it remains in line with ESFA guidance
Crime & Disorder:	There are considered to be no implications arising from this report.
Customer Considerations:	None
Carbon Reduction:	None.
Wards:	All.

CONSULTATION BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report sign off.

Finance Officer	Jan Willis
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Human Resources	n/a
Procurement	n/a
I.T.	n/a
Executive Director of Children's Services	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson

Report Author Sue Aviston – Head of School Organisation and Resources
(01670) 622281

Sue.Aviston@Northumberland.gov.uk

FINAL NFF and NCC FORMULA FUNDING VALUES FOR 2021/22 (all values £)

FINAL 2021/22 NFF and NCC School Funding Formula Values					
Factor (all figures £)	NFF Values 2020/21	NCC Values 2020/21	NFF Values (As published July 2020) 2021/22	Final NCC Values 2021/22	Change in NCC Values 20/21 to 21/22 %
AWPU Primary	2,857	2,919	3,123	3,154	8.05%
KS3	4,018	4,018	4,404	4,404	9.61%
KS4	4,561	4,763	4,963	5,064	6.32%
Lump Sum Primary	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
Middle	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
High/Secondary	114,400	114,400	117,800	117,800	2.97%
Deprivation - Free School Meals Primary	450	510	460	570	11.76%
Secondary	450	510	460	570	11.76%
Deprivation – FSM6 Primary	560	560	575	575	2.68%
Secondary	815	815	840	840	3.07%
Deprivation – IDAC:					
Primary Band F	210	210	215	215	2.38%
Band E	250	250	260	260	4.00%
Band D	375	375	410	410	9.33%
Band C	405	405	445	445	9.88%
Band B	435	435	475	475	9.20%
Band A	600	600	620	620	3.33%
Secondary Band F	300	300	310	310	3.33%
Band E	405	405	415	415	2.47%
Band D	535	535	580	580	8.41%
Band C	580	580	630	630	8.62%
Band B	625	625	680	680	8.80%
Band A	840	840	865	865	2.98%
Low Attainment Primary	1,065	555	1,095	840	51.35%
Secondary	1,610	1,612	1,660	1,660	2.98%
EAL Primary	535	535	550	550	2.80%
Secondary	1,440	1,440	1,485	1,485	3.10%
Sparsity (max): Primary	26,000	26,000	45,000	45,000	73.08%
Middle	n/a	46,800	70,000	70,000	49.57%
Secondary/All Through	67,600	67,600	70,000	70,000	3.55%
Totals Adjusted by Capping and Scaling rates:					
Capping		4%		4.65%	
Scaling		50%		50%	
Minimum Funding Guarantee level	-	1%		2%	

SCHOOL BUDGET SHARES 2021-22 APPENDIX 2

URN	LAESTAB	School Name	20-21 School Budget Shares (Dedicated Schools Grant DSG)	21-22 School Budget Shares (DSG)
Total			186,061,902.21	201,972,083.16
122170	9292002	Acomb First School	296,621.24	344,344.30
122171	9292009	Allendale Primary School	480,222.63	549,913.18
122172	9292015	Swansfield Park Primary School	1,224,950.00	1,391,810.00
122173	9292018	Amble Links First School	602,566.25	672,294.20
122174	9292019	Amble First School	502,371.91	581,775.65
122176	9292030	Bedlington West End First School	1,016,091.61	1,097,124.09
122177	9292032	Bedlington Station Primary School	929,302.63	954,793.00
122178	9292033	Stakeford Primary School	673,920.07	717,103.45
122179	9292035	Cambois Primary School	406,852.48	470,700.50
122180	9292037	Choppington Primary School	521,822.50	564,438.54
122181	9292041	Stead Lane Primary School	951,615.19	1,005,947.10
122183	9292043	Bellingham Primary School	317,135.40	364,030.17
122185	9292046	Spittal Community School	692,673.11	700,356.80
122186	9292047	Tweedmouth West First School	577,302.00	574,721.20
122187	9292050	Tweedmouth Prior Park First School	644,000.04	661,615.32
122188	9292053	Branton Community Primary School	174,205.15	188,564.91
122191	9292074	Cramlington Eastlea Primary School	690,786.23	806,174.18
122193	9292076	Beaconhill Community Primary School	814,417.53	967,166.22
122194	9292077	Cramlington Shanklea Primary School	1,279,960.00	1,365,920.00
122195	9292091	Holywell Village First School	601,768.23	651,002.59
122196	9292098	Broomhill First School	352,443.77	370,657.08
122197	9292101	Red Row First School	480,319.28	486,339.70
122198	9292103	Ellington Primary School	679,725.86	849,538.87
122199	9292105	Linton Primary School	241,740.38	244,818.34
122202	9292138	Stamfordham Primary School	426,854.28	438,666.28
122203	9292142	Hexham First School	492,025.38	529,172.26

122210	9292185	Morpeth First School	1,153,366.25	1,262,292.00
122214	9292207	Seahouses Primary School	426,651.12	470,975.12
122215	9292209	Otterburn Primary School	272,857.10	336,598.46
122216	9292212	Pegswood Primary School	745,151.96	764,745.37
122221	9292224	Rothbury First School	397,020.45	414,168.45
122222	9292227	Beaufront First School	348,717.81	396,421.84
122223	9292228	Seaton Delaval First School	853,786.87	845,401.96
122224	9292229	New Hartley First School	559,597.66	594,566.01
122225	9292232	Seghill First School	453,866.23	553,569.88
122226	9292234	Greenhaugh Primary School	217,725.66	256,575.43
122227	9292236	Slaley First School	258,811.92	291,733.46
122228	9292239	Stannington First School	474,014.28	544,367.02
122232	9292246	Cambo First School	283,380.51	307,024.86
122233	9292254	Kielder Primary School and Nursery	192,572.65	213,067.09
122234	9292268	Seaton Sluice First School	614,950.88	659,857.01
122236	9292277	Wooler First School	481,726.02	537,738.02
122238	9292281	Shilbottle Primary School	549,145.68	560,573.61
122239	9292291	Bothal Primary School	2,257,697.80	2,519,752.60
122240	9292293	Swarland Primary School	398,022.14	460,589.16
122242	9292299	The Sele First School	1,450,434.00	1,571,604.00
122243	9292323	Mowbray Primary School	1,042,250.72	1,107,271.79
122244	9292325	Belford Primary School	413,563.63	442,654.02
122247	9292370	Ringway Primary School	743,555.31	834,811.83
122248	9292372	Scremerston First School	347,651.81	383,817.68
122254	9292397	Horton Grange Primary School	1,793,169.38	1,927,720.76
122258	9292407	New Delaval Primary School	1,010,912.75	1,144,761.97
122261	9292415	Newsham Primary School	1,664,844.51	1,823,939.69
122264	9292525	Hipsburn Primary School	440,954.77	481,545.07
122266	9292527	Burnside Primary School	1,441,412.00	1,598,052.00
122268	9292529	Hareside Primary School	1,466,169.69	1,571,016.00
122269	9292530	Cramlington Northburn Primary School	1,135,102.00	1,286,172.00
131021	9292531	Central Primary School	2,825,395.03	3,082,573.04
122271	9293046	Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School	433,157.10	422,168.49

122272	9293065	Chollerton Church of England Aided First School	237,858.51	283,529.95
122273	9293095	Felton Church of England Primary School	402,328.08	462,285.52
122276	9293135	Henshaw Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School	341,786.29	403,418.75
122277	9293173	Longhoughton Church of England Primary School	480,592.32	484,905.88
122279	9293264	Whittingham Church of England Primary School	429,285.70	462,317.82
122280	9293312	St Michael's Church of England Primary School	465,660.06	539,660.70
122281	9293333	Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England First School	1,126,908.28	1,199,861.64
122282	9293346	Holy Trinity Church of England First School	563,735.43	614,409.76
122283	9293347	Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Aided First School	391,838.96	402,455.00
122284	9293349	Greenhead Church of England Primary School	320,425.95	359,845.99
122285	9293355	Broomhaugh Church of England First School	327,113.61	374,352.59
122287	9293367	Corbridge Church of England Aided First School	520,510.40	557,394.58
122289	9293403	Ellingham Church of England Aided Primary School	337,305.39	365,460.86
122290	9293408	Embleton Vincent Edwards Church of England Primary School	249,160.77	285,659.23
122291	9293411	Hugh Joicey Church of England First School, Ford	301,715.03	345,747.25
122293	9293443	Whitley Chapel Church of England First School	221,514.02	264,660.96
122294	9293447	Holy Island Church of England First School	143,618.40	169,415.20
122295	9293454	Humshaugh Church of England First School	270,165.48	295,789.69
122297	9293487	Morpeth All Saints Church of England Aided First School	761,292.40	864,971.20
122298	9293492	Newbrough Church of England Primary School	344,605.67	391,584.82
122299	9293542	Tritlington Church of England First School	244,747.84	283,546.57
122300	9293548	Wark Church of England Primary School	245,137.62	306,940.69
122302	9293560	Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School	274,932.91	308,621.12
122305	9293713	St Paul's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School	726,132.99	769,768.87
122307	9293726	St Aidan's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	905,039.91	968,288.93
122309	9293746	St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School, Berwick	361,969.23	393,122.51
122312	9293888	St Robert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School	554,314.49	628,557.72
134473	9293918	Cragside CofE Controlled Primary School	1,334,652.57	1,512,975.47
135064	9293920	Norham St Ceolwulfs CofE Controlled First School	208,643.76	252,199.13
131221	9293922	Lowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School	229,996.05	259,925.67
135634	9293923	Grange View Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School	511,073.38	508,729.03
122326	9294079	Corbridge Middle School	1,570,155.00	1,694,492.50
122334	9294161	Seaton Sluice Middle School	1,561,944.02	1,622,200.20

122335	9294162	Whytrig Community Middle School	1,167,028.64	1,349,596.04
122348	9294332	Tweedmouth Community Middle School	1,503,212.72	1,713,274.25
122350	9294361	Bellingham Middle School and Sports College	516,399.97	557,659.88
122352	9294370	Glendale Middle School	666,979.64	697,040.71
122354	9294404	Berwick Middle School	1,485,436.72	1,597,427.60
122328	9294130	Haydon Bridge Community High School and Sports College	1,890,183.17	2,087,556.45
122362	9294438	The Duchess's Community High School	6,601,263.63	7,183,198.93
122363	9294439	James Calvert Spence College	3,758,645.10	3,896,796.56
122374	9295400	Astley Community High School	2,409,112.91	2,593,171.31
138257	9292000	Cramlington Village Primary School	731,308.97	855,109.37
143543	9292001	Adderlane Academy	465,016.28	524,900.61
144478	9292003	Whitfield CofE Primary School	226,744.78	243,398.94
145412	9292005	Shaftoe Trust Academy	462,047.24	475,079.31
145956	9292006	NCEA Bishop's Primary School	5,533,284.29	5,926,219.30
146372	9292007	Haltwhistle Primary Academy	899,063.15	930,090.93
146544	9292008	Malvin's Close Academy	1,671,735.03	1,794,602.37
146545	9292010	Croftway Academy	1,500,713.23	1,659,451.42
145779	9292044	Belsay Primary School	424,716.26	444,688.58
146860	9292056	Broomley First School	551,273.06	579,144.00
145780	9292215	Ponteland Primary School	1,543,170.80	1,755,143.20
146924	9292217	Prudhoe Castle First School	321,006.60	348,828.93
146937	9292219	Mickley First School	399,303.77	412,433.86
144180	9292220	Prudhoe West Academy	855,872.67	871,675.11
146949	9292270	Whittonstall First School	321,794.16	360,741.55
146911	9292278	Wylam First School	510,523.19	558,675.77
144181	9292354	Abbeyfields First School	1,122,490.00	1,238,220.00
147820	9292360	Morpeth Stobhillgate First School	629,536.31	630,265.07
139756	9292405	Morpeth Road Academy	1,682,097.40	1,698,206.85
145781	9292526	Darras Hall Primary School	1,846,065.00	1,880,345.00
145782	9293133	Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England Primary School	685,469.05	830,686.40
146931	9293210	Ovingham Church of England First School	542,763.21	572,608.83
145638	9293423	Harbottle Church of England First School	212,117.61	236,573.77
147930	9293550	NCEA Warkworth Church of England Primary School	490,563.95	583,468.86

141832	9293770	Ss Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary Academy	807,817.78	837,179.44
141828	9293917	St Matthew's Catholic Primary School	557,284.42	617,951.03
143469	9294150	Ponteland Community Primary School	853,025.36	940,496.41
138078	9294168	Meadowdale Academy	1,489,921.00	1,204,790.57
145784	9294800	Richard Coates Church of England Primary School	1,309,471.81	1,399,722.40
145637	9295201	Thropton Village First School	236,214.53	266,735.54
137747	9294000	Morpeth Chantry Middle School	2,343,570.80	2,574,255.80
146871	9294198	Highfield Middle School	1,767,148.92	1,938,397.17
146894	9294199	Ovingham Middle School	1,409,675.20	1,524,767.70
137748	9294309	Morpeth Newminster Middle School	2,274,658.80	2,446,911.30
143292	9294441	Hexham Middle School	1,968,599.60	2,185,592.10
145639	9294802	Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School	1,032,171.05	1,127,325.39
140002	9294002	The Blyth Academy	4,542,802.12	5,047,303.96
144601	9294005	Ashington Academy	5,092,229.38	5,461,271.54
144977	9294008	Bedlington Academy	3,915,847.44	4,333,376.41
146926	9294369	Prudhoe Community High School	3,042,852.12	3,313,823.68
143291	9294417	Queen Elizabeth High School	4,769,712.50	5,136,383.00
137457	9294424	Cramlington Learning Village	8,898,147.11	9,602,438.72
145783	9294426	Ponteland High School	6,560,395.20	7,085,673.15
137598	9294437	Berwick Academy	2,174,728.82	2,422,605.70
137746	9294501	The King Edward VI Academy	5,032,634.67	5,457,073.67
141814	9294632	St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy	5,539,160.92	6,088,410.55
135886	9296906	NCEA Duke's Secondary School	4,915,319.72	5,605,247.89
135619	9296905	Bede Academy	7,638,845.36	8,389,136.98
148282	9293711	St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	1,224,377.05	1,227,599.35
148283	9293732	St Bede's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School	794,118.89	876,480.95
148261	9293840	St Mary's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided First School	494,629.07	533,436.04
148260	9294654	St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Middle School	1,412,311.80	1,387,207.53
122190	9292070	West Woodburn First School (closed 31 Aug 2020)	151,802.93	-

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Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2ND SEPTEMBER 2021

SEND Revisit May 2021

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Members: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson and Cllr Wendy Pattison

Purpose of report

This report informs the committee of the findings of the SEND Revisit from Ofsted and CQC and outlines next steps to be taken.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Note the contents of the report;
- 2) Support next steps to be taken

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'We want you to achieve and realise your potential (Learning)' and 'We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for (Living)' priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

SEND Revisit

NCC and Northumberland CCG were given notification of a SEND revisit by Ofsted and CQC on 5th May 2021 to identify whether the local area had made sufficient progress on the areas of improvement identified by the SEND inspection in October 2018. The area was required to submit written evidence within four working days to the Ofsted portal and to CQC and informed which focus groups should be arranged and their focus.

The inspection was led by an Ofsted HMI Lead Inspector with an inspector from CQC and two shadow inspectors. The inspection commenced on 19th May with presentations from the Executive Director for Childrens and Adult Services and leads for each areas of weakness. In addition, both inspectors met with the regional leads from NHSE and DfE

who have monitored progress in Northumberland since the SEND inspection in October 2018.

Detailed position statements for the three areas of weakness were submitted alongside 94 pieces of evidence that detailed the actions taken, progress made and the impact on children and young people with SEND and their families.

Inspectors spoke with parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and met with local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. They spoke with frontline practitioners from education, health and care services in the area and reviewed a range of performance data and information, including the area's SEND strategy, self-evaluation, joint commissioning strategy and outcomes framework.

Inspectors reviewed a sample of education, health and care (EHC) plans, as well as education, health and care advices relating to these plans. Inspectors considered 558 responses to the online survey for parents and carers.

During the revisit inspectors commended professionals they met for their openness, honesty and their passion for the work being undertaken in improving support for children, young people with SEND and their families.

Outcome of revisit

The outcome of the SEND revisit was published on the 13th July 2021. Inspectors found that the area has made sufficient progress in addressing the three areas of significant weakness identified at the initial inspection. As such, it is no longer subject to the formal quarterly support and challenge visits from the DfE and NHS England which will cease.

Inspectors found there has been significant improvement with a seismic change in leadership and culture since Northumberland was inspected in October 2018. The following strengths were highlighted

- Collegiate approach to the delivery of SEND developments
- Revitalised strategy for children and young people with SEND
- Improved quality Of Education Health Care Plans
- Strong waiting times for children and young people to receive support for mental health
- Good understanding of the importance of early identification and the graduated approach from SENCOs with needs being met more consistently across schools
- Strong Parent Carer Forum providing challenge to the SEND Partnership
- Academic outcomes are improving and exclusions for learners with SEND have reduced year on year for three years

While the outcome is positive, it is important to note the context. The revisit inspected whether the improvements the SEND Partnership committed to make detailed within the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) Plan were delivered and whether they are improving experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. The SEND Partnership while wishing to demonstrate positive progress also acknowledged to the

inspectors that there is more to do, particularly in relation to Preparation for Adulthood and supporting inclusive educational practice in mainstream schools.

Continuing improvement and development within SEND

SEND Strategy

Following a period of consultation, Northumberland’s SEND Strategy 2021 - 2024 was published in early June and can be accessed [here](#).

The strategy details four key priorities

1. Working together
2. Delivering the right support at the right time (including therapy services and support for those with sensory processing difficulties)
3. Inclusive education and success for all learners
4. Effectively prepare children and young people for adulthood

The workstreams that supported the written statement of action have now been aligned with the priorities to enable the effective delivery of the strategy. An action plan will be published in the Autumn Term 21 detailing what actions will be taken to address the four priorities that will enable improvement and development work within SEND to continue.

Policy	Developments detailed within the report outline steps being made towards strategic objectives.
Finance and value for money	Efficient systems and processes within SEND underpin the transparent and equitable allocation of SEND finances. Currently there is no need for additional funding.
Legal	The SEND Code of Practice places a number of statutory requirements on Local Authorities and CCGs. These are detailed within the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulation 2014.
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	n/a
Property	Capacity planning for the provision of specialist educational placements may involve capital development.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached)	SEND promotes the inclusion of children and young people within their schools and communities.

Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	There is a risk that services will not be effective or efficient if the governance and strategy is not robustly monitored.
Crime & Disorder	Youth Offending and SEND populations overlap.
Customer Consideration	The views of children, young people and their parents / carers are central to developments and improvements within SEND.
Carbon reduction	SEND school transport arrangements are linked.
Health and Wellbeing	Supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND aged 0-25 is a core component of the SEND Code of Practice and associated legislation.
Wards	n/a

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Neil Masson
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson/Wendy Pattison

Author and Contact Details

Sam Barron
Strategic Lead for SEND & Designated Clinical Officer

Samantha.barron@northumberland.gov.uk



Northumberland County Council

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny

2ND SEPTEMBER 2021

Peer Review for Care Leavers Service-update report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of report

To provide the members with an update of the actions to be undertaken following the Peer Challenge undertaken in September 2018 including a current view of the offer for care leavers in Northumberland

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) Members are assured that there is an action plan in place to take forward improvements to services for care leavers as part of continuous improvement planning in children's social care.
- 2) Members continue to have an overview of the Northumberland offer for careleavers and understand their role as corporate parents for care leavers.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the; Living, Enjoying, Connecting and Learning priorities all included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2020-2021.

Key issues

1. A Peer challenge took place in September 2018 following which an action plan was drawn up with improvement targets. All actions identified within that plan have now been completed
2. The service for care leavers was part of the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) in February 2020 where it received positive feedback as part of the overall 'Good' judgement.
3. Northumberland County Council have signed up to the Careleavers Covenant which sets out the commitment to care leavers as a corporate parent.
4. In February 2021 the service invited Mark Riddell, the DFE National Adviser for Careleavers, to come and review the service. He provided broadly positive feedback and made some recommendations which the service have considered and where relevant added this to the ongoing service action plan.

5. Performance in relation to the percentage of care leavers we are in touch with, who are in suitable accommodation and numbers in education, employment and training have continued to improve.

Background

The peer challenge which happened in September 2018 resulted in an action plan and reports on the progression of this have been provided to this committee in December 2018 and June 2019, the second particularly in relation to the education employment and training offer for care leavers.

UPDATED POSITION

All actions within the peer challenge action plan have now been completed.

Childrens social care was subject to an Ofsted/CGC/HMIP Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in June 2019 (with a focus on exploitation) and an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) in February 2020, both of which were positive about the support provided to care leavers in Northumberland.

Further to these inspections the service invited Mark Riddell, DfE National Adviser for Care leavers to review the service; because of the pandemic this visit was delayed but took place in February 2021 virtually. His feedback was broadly positive. The recommendations he made have been looked at by the service and those deemed appropriate and relevant have been incorporated into the ongoing action plan for the care leavers service which is part of the continuous improvement plan for children's social care.

The local offer for care leavers has continued to develop since the last report to this board in relation to the action plan and Northumberland have since signed up to the Care leavers Covenant which makes a commitment as a corporate parent to care leavers.

The performance in relation to care leavers continues to be an improving picture for care leavers in suitable accommodation (95.1% 20/21 94%19/20) and in education, training and employment (53.3%20/21 49%19/20). Performance in both areas is now above the England average. The service is also in touch with more care leavers (96.7% 20/21 94%19/20)

CONCLUSION

The action plan arising from the peer challenge was an important part of the improvement journey for the care leavers service in Northumberland. There is an ongoing action plan to continue that improvement, but this has now become part of 'business as usual' operational delivery.

Providing the best services we can to our care leavers including the development of the care leavers covenant and the corporate parenting responsibilities across the council is, and will continue to be, a high priority.

Implications

Policy	To ensure that care leavers are considered as a priority group in all council policies moving forward.
Finance and value for money	No additional areas
Legal	The local authority has a statutory duty to provide support for care leavers until they are 21 or 25 in higher education or request that support
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	N/A
Crime & Disorder	Young people who have been looked after are statistically more likely to be represented in the justice system including custody. Providing high quality support and meaningful education, employment and training opportunities can help to reduce this risk
Customer Consideration	The local authority is the corporate parent for Looked After Children and care leavers. All council officers and members should have aspirations for this group of children and young people and be actively seeking to support them.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	Care leavers are disproportionately represented in a number of high risk areas including likelihood of suicide and long term physical and mental health issues.
Wards	All wards

Background papers:

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Neil Masson
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

Mary Connor, Head of Service Childrens Social Care
(01670) 620349
mary.connor@[northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:mary.connor@northumberland.gov.uk)



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 2 SEPTEMBER 2021

Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 - Adult social care, children's social care, and continuing health care services

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Members: Councillor Wendy Pattison, Adults' Wellbeing

Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Children and Young People

Purpose of report

To inform members of the Committee of:

- The activities of the and Adult Services and Children's Social Care complaints service, including work on behalf of the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group;
- How customer experiences are sought and to provide an overview of what people have said about our services;
- How complaints are handled and statistical information from 2020/21;
- Matters of general note arising out of those complaints including some examples where action has been or is to be taken in order to improve services;
- Decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Health Service Ombudsman in respect of complaints they received about children's and adult services; and
- Other feedback from people who use our services.

Recommendations

1. **The Committee is recommended to note the content of the report and identify any additional areas for scrutiny.**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the "Living" priority in the Corporate Plan.

Key issues

1. Over 2020/21 the number of adult social care complaints reported is lower than last year, however, compliments have increased, particularly those reported by independent providers. The number of Children's Services complaints has remained about the same although proportionally more are being dealt with via the corporate process as

they are received from adults claiming injustice, rather than from the children being cared for. The focus remains on lessons learned and improving service provision.

2. Every complaint is handled in a person-centred way, taking into account risk, seriousness, complexity or sensitivity of events.
3. When it is appropriate we are using findings to improve services and people's experience.

Customer Experience: Joint Children's and Adult Services Customer Experience: Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2016/2017

BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Adult and Children's Services want local people who use social services to have a strong voice in helping to monitor, develop and improve the way we work. Customer experience information helps us understand how our services affect the lives of people who use our services, their carers and families and in turn this helps inform our service development. Complaints handling is a statutory function governed by the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 for Adult Services; and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 for Children's Services.
- 1.2 In respect of adult social services, the complaints procedure is for a person who receives or has received services from us; or for a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by any of our actions, omissions or decisions. In respect of children's social services, the complaints procedure is for a child or young person to make representations, including complaints, about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's children's social services provision; and for any other appropriate person to act on behalf of the child or young person concerned or to make a complaint in their own right.
- 1.3 People who use our services are encouraged to give feedback about their experiences and many choose to compliment our staff and/or the services they use. Overall, we receive many more compliments than complaints.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy	Complaints contribute to monitoring the impact of the Council's policies and the effectiveness with which they are being implemented.
Finance and value for money	There are no direct implications.

Legal	There are no direct legal implications although arrangements are in place to ensure that if complaints suggest that someone is being abused, or a crime may have been committed, there is an appropriate response.
Procurement	There are no direct implications.
Human Resources	There are no direct implications.
Property	There are no direct implications.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A X	There are no direct implications.
Risk Assessment	Individual complaints are risk-assessed on receipt, and appropriate actions are taken if someone is at immediate risk of harm.
Crime & Disorder	Arrangements are in place to ensure that if complaints suggest that someone is being abused, or a crime may have been committed, there is an appropriate response.
Customer Considerations	Complaints are one of a range of methods by which we receive feedback on the quality and consistency of our services. They are also invaluable for learning lessons and quality improvement.
Carbon reduction	There are no direct carbon reduction implications.
Wards	All

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background documents for this report within the meaning of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report.

	Initials
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
Executive Director	CM

Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 - Adult social care, children's social care, and continuing health care services

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES Overview and Scrutiny Committee ■ 2

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Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	GRT

Authors and contact details

Report Author: James Hillery – adult social care complaints manager

Email: james.hillery@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk

Report Author: Karen Willis – children’s social care complaints manager

Email: karen.willis@northumberland.gov.uk



Northumberland
County Council

In partnership with

Northumbria Healthcare 
NHS Foundation Trust

and


Northumberland
Clinical Commissioning Group

Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021

- **Adult social care and children's social care**
- **Continuing health care services**

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Introduction

- 0.1 This 'Complaints Annual Report' report covers adult social care, children's social care and the NHS responsibilities for continuing health care and related services which the Council delivers under a partnership arrangement with Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group.**
- 0.2 The report is in two parts and describes what people have said about both our adult and children's social care services in Northumberland and what we have learned as a consequence during 2020/21. The report also describes what people have said about NHS continuing healthcare funded by Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group and about supporting people in their own home or in a care home.**
- 0.3 Part 1 of the report covers adult social care complaints and CHC care and related services complaints; part 2, children's social care.**
- 0.4 This report emphasises the approach in both adults and children's social care services to listening and respecting all feedback offered, valuing each individual's perspective on care they receive, and resolving issues raised by people in Northumberland. It also explains in the appendix the differences in custom and practice in complaint handling which have evolved to meet the requirements of the relevant national regulations and guidance in both service areas.**
- 0.5 Complaints about adult social care and health care are handled under national regulations introduced in 2009. As noted above, we handle complaints on behalf of Northumberland CCG about continuing healthcare funded care.**
- 0.6 The arrangements for the statutory management of complaints from children and young people (and their representatives) are set out in the Children Act 1989 and Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. This legislation requires that everyone who provides social services must have procedures in place to respond to complaints made about those services.**
- 0.7 Despite significant differences in detail, both sets of regulations and guidance emphasise that complaints should be approached positively as opportunities for learning, as well as providing a means by which people can ask the organisation to address the specifics of poor services or bad decisions which affect them individually.**

PART ONE

Adult social care complaints – 2020/21

- 1.1 The complaints service directly handled all the social care and continuing healthcare complaints made to Northumberland County Council. Please note that some complaints closed were carried over from 2019/20 and some complaints will carry over into 2021/22. The table below notes the numbers of complaints received in 2020/21 and the previous two years:

Complaints received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Adult social care	34	50	44	↓
CHC	5	8	3	↓
Total	39	58	47	↓

- 1.2 Over the past year we have seen a drop in the number of complaints being made, although higher than two years ago.
- 1.3 The table below shows adult social care complaints received by Durham County Council which has similarities with Northumberland.

Complaints received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Durham	81	81	75	↓

- 1.4 The table below shows the comparative number of adult social care complaints received per 1,000 service users based on the most recent figures available:

Area	Approximate number of adult social care service users	Complaints per 1,000
Durham	18,500	4.4
Northumberland	7,000	6.7

- 1.5 The table below notes the numbers of complaints received and responded to in 2020/21 and the previous two years:

Complaints responded to	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Adult social care	26	54	41	↓

CHC	6	9	3	↓
Total	32	63	44	↓

1.6 In line with the decrease of complaints received, we have seen a corresponding decrease in the numbers responded to over 2019/20.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS (CHC complaints data follows later)

1.7 The table below shows the outcomes from the responded to adult social care complaints, whether upheld, not upheld, or partly upheld:

Complaints outcomes	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Upheld	3	13	8	↓
Not upheld	13	25	14	↓
Partly upheld	10	16	19	↑
Total	26	54	41	↓
Upheld and partly upheld combined	13	29	27	↓

1.8 The table below shows the above information as a percentage and suggests that while the trend of upheld complaints is downwards, over 2020/21 we have found that most complainants have a point, albeit a comparatively minor one in many cases:

Complaints outcomes	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Upheld	12%	24%	20%	↓
Not upheld	50%	46%	34%	↓
Partly upheld	38%	30%	46%	↑
Upheld and partly upheld combined	50%	54%	66%	↑

1.9 The table below provides some comparative data for complaint outcomes with Durham County Council, using the most recent data:

Area	Upheld and partly upheld complaints
Durham	43%
Northumberland	66%

1.10 The table below shows the complaints responded to by service area. Care management continues to receive the most complaints, which is to be expected in the context of the number of service user contacts for that service area, although the number of complaints remains low compared to the work done which suggests that staff get things right most of the time. We have also seen a decrease in the numbers of complaints related to independent providers which is matched by an increase in compliments noted later in this report. Analysis suggests that this trend reflects the positive views held by many service users, carers, and families about independent providers in Northumberland and how they have coped during the pandemic.

Service area complained about	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Care management	15	32	29	↓
Finance team	4	4	5	↑
Home improvement service	X	1	3	↑
Independent provider	2	10	3	↓
In-house provider	1	1	X	↓
Occupational therapy	X	1	X	↓
Onecall	1	1	X	↓
Safeguarding adults team	2	X	X	→
Self-directed support team	X	1	1	→
Short term support service	1	3	X	↓
Total	26	54	41	↓

1.11 Despite the overall decrease in complaints, charges continue to be an underlying issue in many complaints. In this context, the key issues complained about, such as 'disagreements', 'communication' and the 'standard of service provision' are to be expected. Analysis suggests that this is at least in part due to people having, quite rightly, high expectations of services; and in part because service users are expected to contribute (more) towards the cost of their care.

1.12 The subject matter of the complaints responded to is shown in the following table:

Subject matter	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Adaptations & equipment	X	1	X	↓
Attitude or conduct of staff	2	2	2	→
Communication / information	3	7	7	→
Contact arrangements	1	1	X	↓
Disagreement with assessments / reports	X	4	3	↓
Disagreement with decisions	7	3	7	↑
Failure to follow procedure	4	3	4	↑
Finance / funding	4	9	4	↓
Health & safety	1	X	X	→
Speed or delays in service	X	2	X	↓
Standard of service provision	4	22	14	↓
Total	26	54	41	↓

1.13 As noted above, key areas relate to ‘disagreements’, ‘communication’ and the ‘standard of service provision’.

1.14 What these complaints tell us is addressed in the section on learning.

CHC COMPLAINTS

1.15 In respect of CHC complaints, these remain low in comparison to adult social care complaints. The table below shows the outcomes from the complaints responded to, whether upheld, not upheld, or partly upheld, over the past three years.

Complaints outcomes	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
---------------------	---------	---------	---------	-------

Upheld	2	1	1	↓
Not upheld	2	1	0	↓
Partly upheld	2	7	2	↓
Total	6	9	3	↓
Upheld and partly upheld combined	4	8	3	↓

1.16 What this data tells us is addressed in the section on learning.

1.17 The table below shows the complaints responded to by service area. Care management continues to have the most complaints, and as noted above, is to be expected in the context of the number of service user contacts for that service area compared to others. The nurse assessment team is responsible for overseeing the process that determines eligibility for CHC funding and has received no complaints – in part this can be explained by the pause to carrying out assessments during the pandemic.

Service area complained about	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Care management	4	5	2	↓
Independent provider	X	X	1	↑
Nurse assessment team	2	2	X	↓
Occupational therapy	X	1	X	↓
Support planners	X	1	X	↓
Total	6	9	3	↓

1.18 The following table shows the subject matter complained about for CHC complaints as a number:

Subject matter	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Attitude or conduct of staff	X	1	X	↓
Disagreement with assessments / reports	1	1	1	→
Disagreement	1	X	X	→

with decisions				
Failure to follow procedure	X	3	1	
Finance / funding	2	1	X	
Speed or delays in service	2	X	X	
Standard of service provision	X	3	1	
Total	6	9	3	

1.19 What these complaints tell us is addressed in the section on learning.

2. Learning from the people who use our adult social care services

2.1 Many of the issues have been reported over 2020/21 reflect the kind of situations which can occur from time to time in a large care organisations but we take each one seriously, and take steps to address both the individual situation of the complainant and any wider issues about systems, training and guidance which are raised, as the table below describes in general terms.

Key Themes	Responses to upheld complaint
Delays e.g. to arranging a service, appointment or assessment	Set up service, appointment or assessment at the earliest practicable time and apologise. Issue addressed through individual or team supervision as appropriate.
Communication e.g. lack of response to phone calls	Apology given. Ensure individual and team, as appropriate, comply with existing communication policy. Individual supervision and training as appropriate.
Staff attitude e.g. failure to handle a difficult situation sensitively	Apology given. Issue addressed through individual or team supervision and training as appropriate.
Quality of service provision e.g. treatment which caused poor outcomes or homecare provision that was of poor quality	Apology given. On-going monitoring and review of service quality. Service review through contract team and/or operational management.
Questions about the information in reports or assessments	Factual errors are amended, text clarified as appropriate and explanations given about outcomes and conclusions.
Processes – especially financial, legal and poorly understood assessment processes	Restitution/refund or waiving of charge if appropriate. Emphasis on explaining matters. Review any financial arrangements to make sure that they are correct.

	<p>Advice/signposting especially in respect of court matters and how adult social care work relates to this. On-going monitoring of effectiveness of processes.</p>
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2.2 Where complaints have been resolved relatively quickly and satisfactorily the common factor is the most appropriate manager making early contact with the complainant, often face to face, and taking prompt action to resolve matters. It is important to listen and to acknowledge people’s experiences; and to apologise as appropriate.

2.3 Listening to the views and experiences of the people who use our services and of carers is extremely important, but what is more important is how we respond to this.

2.4 The following section provides a selection of ‘thumbnail’ portraits by subject matter in the key areas of to ‘disagreements’, ‘communication’ and the ‘standard of service provision’ to illustrate the actions taken to resolve complaints and improve services where they were upheld and party upheld. Please note that work is on-going to better understand the issue of charging and complaints to determine what changes, if any, may be needed to systems, processes, and/or training programmes. However, it should be noted that service users whose care is fully funded by the Council i.e. who do not have to contribute towards the cost of their care, may be more likely to express dissatisfaction with their service (from an analysis of the most recent adult social care survey).

2.5 Communication/information:

1. A family member complained that her mother hadn’t been offered a care package on the Council’s contract and as a result she had been paying more for her care privately. On investigation it was found that the allocated worker hadn’t clearly explained to the client her options or provided the relevant information in writing, and as a result it seemed more likely than not that the client would have chosen to have her care arranged by adult social care had she received and understood all the information presented. The difference in cost was offered as an *ex gratia* payment and an apology made. The member of staff concerned was reminded about the importance of making sure clients understand all their options and are given the relevant information sheets.

2. A son complained that he had received a finance letter indicating that the sender had spoken to his father and would review his case in a year’s time even though his father had died several weeks earlier. On investigation it was found that this standard, un-amended letter was accompanied by a cover letter for the executor’s records. The IO acknowledged that the finance letter should not have been sent and a full apology was given. The member of staff concerned was reminded about their responsibilities and the effect their lapse of judgement had had.

- 3. A family member complained that they'd had no response to any of their emails sent to the team manager, all related to a specific service user. On investigation, it was found that the team manager was on a planned extended leave from work and that they had put on their 'out of office', properly directing people to manager covering for them. IT was also asked to look into this matter because the complainant said that they'd not received any 'out of office' replies and had checked their 'junk' folder – IT confirmed that the 'out of office' had been put on before the complainant's first email was sent and IT concluded that the complainant's email provider's security filters had likely stopped the 'out of office' notifications. An apology was given to the complainant for their experiences and the issues they had raised in their emails to the team manager were addressed promptly.**

2.6.1 Disagreements:

- 1. A family member complained that his mother was being given more care than she needed and as result was having to pay more. On investigation it was found that the care package involved carers checking on the service user's welfare and administering her medication. She had dementia and was unable to manage her medication safely without help. She received daily calls and additional time was set aside for the carer to collect her medication from the pharmacist once a week and to book it in. The son believed that this additional time could be incorporated into one of the existing visits. On investigation this was not found to be the case – advice to social workers is clear about the minimum amount of time a visit should last when medication is logged in and/or dispensed. The son was offered alternatives, such as arranging his mother's care privately, should he and his mother remain dissatisfied with the social worker's assessment.**
- 2. A service user complained about why it had been decided that she now had to ask her social worker for money when she had previously been able to ask the finance team (the Council is her court appointed deputy for finance). On investigation, it was found that it is the social worker who should be the decision maker about budgets and payments and in this case, it appears that the service user had been bypassing this arrangement. An apology was made and an explanation given about what had gone wrong. The members of staff involved were reminded about their respective roles. A new budget was also set up with the service user with which she was happy.**
- 3. A family member complained about why a social worker had placed her husband into a particular care home following treatment in hospital. On investigation it was found that the service user had been ready for discharge and that the MDT had decided, with involvement from the family member, that a care home placement was needed (the client had dementia and some challenging behaviours). It was also found that the son, who held a legal power to make decisions on behalf of his father, had agreed to the placement, the only suitable one that was available at the time despite a search by the social worker.**

4. A family member complained about the decision to charge her father for his care based on half the money in a joint account, most of which the complainant said was hers. On investigation it was found that the family member, who held a legal power to manage the service user's financial affairs, had not disclosed any meaningful detail about the account. Without this information it was (correctly, according to the guidance) assumed that half of the money belonged to the service user and in this context, the service user had been assessed correctly and charged accordingly.

2.7 The standard of service provision:

1. A family member complained about the standard of care her mother received from a care provider. On investigation, it was found that the family member had raised her concerns promptly with the provider but no response had been given. Similarly, the provider was unable to provide assurances that the carer had followed the care plan. Apologies were given, the charges waived, and the contracts and commissioning team involved so that they could use these findings in their inspection programme.
2. A family member complained about the care her mother had received in a care home. On investigation it was found that mistakes had been made but each had been appropriately reported and addressed with no harm to the service user. The investigating officer considered that communication was an underlying issue and steps were taken to try to improve the relationship between family and the staff at the care home.
3. A service user complained that no one was taking responsibility for the remedial work that was needed to his bathroom following work done by the Council to deal with a significant water leak under his property. On investigation it was found that this case had drifted. Joint action was quickly agreed by the relevant services (Home Improvement Service and the housing repairs department) and the necessary 'putting right' was carried out promptly.
4. A person complained about the difficulties they had experienced trying to get a care & support assessment. On investigation it was found that the relevant staff service had acted appropriately but it was noted that there may have been some confusion on the caller's part because no assessment referral from her GP had been received as she believed. However, an apology was made for their experience.
5. A family member complained about the apparent lack of response from adult social care when she reached out for help for her mother in a crisis and that subsequently little was done to support her mother who has mental health and alcohol related problems. On investigation, evidence of good practice within the records was found, however, there were gaps in recording, communication should have been better at times, and there was also a misunderstanding about what constitutes a safeguarding concern, and whilst it should not be expected for family to understand this, professionals should be able to explain this to family members and thereby not create misconceptions. There was also a breakdown in communication with the complainant as it appears she had not been fully

informed of her mother's reluctance to accept support (she was able to make this decision for herself). Steps were taken with the member of staff to improve practice around record keeping and with the wider teams around communication with families.

- 2.8 In respect of learning from other adult social care complaints, for example, following a complaint about staff attitude, the process for dealing with calls to Onecall has been changed. Now all messages received by Onecall for the team managers are recorded on swift rather than only in an email; and following two complaints related to hospital discharges, the Homesafe teams have been reminded about the processes for the arranging of temporary and permanent care home placements.**
- 2.9 In respect of independent providers, the complaints team works closely with the contracts and commissioning team and shares all complaints and outcomes with them – this information helps inform the regular monitoring and other work that that team undertakes with providers contracted to the Council.**

CHC COMPLAINT EXAMPLE

- 2.10 The following section provides an example 'thumbnail' portrait from the responded to CHC complaints.**
- 2.11 An apparent failure to follow procedure:**
- 1. A family member complained that their relative had not been provided with a personal health budget sufficient to meet all her needs and as a consequence she had had to use her own money to make sure her needs were met. On investigation, it was found more likely than not that the service user had required a larger package of care than had been funded. In addition, it appears that staff suggested that there was an upper limit to the CHC funding that the service user was able to receive. This was wrong and apologies given for this and the other faults identified in the investigation. The monies the service user had paid out privately were reimbursed and a number of learning opportunities identified for both the staff involved in this case and the wider social work/care management teams.**

1.

3. Adult social care complaints looked at by the Ombudsmen

- 3.1 It is the right of all complainants to ask the appropriate ombudsman to consider their complaint at any point if they remain dissatisfied. It is usual for the ombudsman to ask the complainant to exhaust local procedures before getting involved.
- 3.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) considers complaints about adult social care. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) considers complaints about care funded by the Clinical Commissioning Group – Northumberland. Where a complaint relates to both adult social care and health, it is considered by the Joint Team.
- 3.3 Although every reasonable effort is made to resolve matters we direct the complainant to the relevant ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied in every final complaint response letter.
- 3.4 The table below gives the numbers of investigation decisions received over the past three years. Historically, we have found that around 6 or 7 complainants ask the LSCGO to consider a complaint that adult social care has tried to resolve.

Decisions	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
LGSCO	9	9	6	↓
PHSO	0	0	0	→
Joint Team	1	0	0	→
Total	10	9	6	↓

- 3.5 Over 2018/19 and 2019/20 we received a higher than average numbers for adult social care. Although the 2020/21 numbers have decreased, analysis suggests that the numbers of people who choose to ask LGSCO to consider their complaint may now be increasing from the historically typical 6 or 7 or less to 7 or 8 or more per year. Please note that during lockdown LGSCO suspended taking new complaints and contacting councils, however, this was caught up from the summer of 2020 onwards. As noted earlier in this report, a rise in complaints to LGSCO is in part likely due to high expectations of services; and in part because service users are expected to contribute (more) towards the cost of their care and this is an underlying issue in many complaints. In addition, it can also be an indication of the quality of the relationship that the complainant has with the Council.
- 3.6 Almost all the LGSCO decisions are available to read on their website:
- <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>
- 3.7 Analysis suggests that during the complaints resolution process we are able to recognise where we have got things wrong and to take appropriate

remedial action. Please note that in recent years the LGSCO has changed their focus and will highlight any faults in the original case handling over how effectively we investigated and remedied the issues raised. The LGSCO is the final stage in the complaints process and there is no appeal except through judicial review.

- 3.8 The table below provides some comparative data for LGSCO complaints outcomes with Durham County Council, using the 2021 data available on the LGSCO website:

Area	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed after initial enquiries	Total
Durham	10	0	5	15
Northumberland	3	1	2	6

- 3.9 The following pages summarise the substantive outcomes of those Northumberland complaints considered by LGSCO in 2020/21. Please note that LGSCO made more decisions than the ones noted below, the ones not reported on are those where the LGSCO considered the complaint 'premature', where there was insufficient information for LGSCO to progress the complaint, or where the person requested their complaint not to proceed, for example. These decisions are not routinely shared with the Council.

Summary of complaint	Summary of ombudsman's final decision
Adult services	
<p>19 020 559 Ms X complains about the conduct of a person she believed to be a council officer.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman cannot investigate Ms X's complaint. This is because the Council is not responsible for the matter complained about.</p> <p>(Please note that while this complaint was aimed at adult social care, LGSCO have logged it under 'corporate and other services'.)</p>
<p>19 017 603 Mrs X complained the Council failed to provide full information about her financial assessment and the costs of her care before she started receiving care from a new care provider.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman found there was fault causing injustice when the Council failed to provide enough information about charging. The Council agreed to a suitable remedy.</p> <p>(In our original complaint response, we acknowledged that we hadn't provided the information sheet that would have told Mrs X that she would be a full charge payer because she owned a second home – this fact only became apparent to Mrs X when she was financially assessed which was after her service began. As part of our follow up, we took steps to remind relevant staff about providing full information on charging, the process, and keeping a suitable record.)</p>
<p>20 000 824 Ms Q, says that the manager of a care home refused to allow her to see her sister who was dying of cancer.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman will not investigate this complaint about the refusal of a care home to allow the complainant to visit her sister. This is because there is no worthwhile outcome that he could achieve through additional investigation.</p>
<p>20 001 884 Mr C, complained on behalf of his son, that the Council has failed to increase his son's Personal</p>	<p>The Ombudsman found the Council identified the correct steps to resolve the issue, which was a reassessment of Mr X's needs. As such, we discontinued our investigation because nothing further could be achieved</p>

<p>Budget along with inflation over the last few years, as a result of which he does not receive enough money anymore to meet his needs.</p>	<p>for Mr X.</p>
<p>20 004 092 Ms A complains in her own right and on behalf of her father, Mr D, that the Council failed to: a) make a refund of council tax properly; b) assess charges for care properly; c) consider the “ownership” of a joint bank account; d) deal with complaints properly and in a timely manner.</p>	<p>The Council has recognised and apologised for faults in a delayed council tax refund, and some aspects of its financial assessments for community support and residential care. The Ombudsman considers the actions taken and the apologies provided are sufficient to remedy the errors made. The Ombudsman does not find fault in the Council’s approach to assessing Mr D’s finances for charges related to his long-term residential care. It has made legitimate enquiries about withdrawals from a bank account.</p>
<p>20 007 684 Mr X complained for his mother Mrs Y that the Council: a) did not complete an assessment of Mrs Y’s mental capacity to make a decision about going into a care home, which was not in line with its responsibilities under the Mental Capacity Act; b) did not tell Mrs Y a cheaper room may have been available c) did not give her full, transparent information about the different fees for different room types so she was not properly informed when making the decision</p>	<p>The Ombudsman found: a) There was no fault in not completing a mental capacity assessment; b) It is common practice for care providers to have different rates for private paying individuals and councils. Councils are often contracting at a reduced rate compared with private individuals because they are commissioning multiple beds. This is market forces and not fault; c) We would expect the Council to provide a leaflet or signpost a self-funder to independent financial advice and there is no record of any signposting Mrs Y to independent financial advice in this case; d) There was nothing to be added to the Council’s complaint response by setting out the full detail of a call between a social worker and Mr X ... I note the Council’s reason for giving full details of a phone call between Mr X and an officer. I do not share the Council’s view that transparency or an inability to deliver Mr X’s desired outcome required it to give a word for word account; and</p>

d) tarnished his character and motives by using information selectively in its complaint response and failed to address the substantive issues
e) Failed to challenge the care provider's lack of openness about fees.

e) The Council had no involvement in fees and it is not at fault.

4. Adult social care enquires received in 2020/21

- 4.1 The Complaints Service also responds to a number of ‘enquiries’ from service users, carers, families and members of the public and which relate to adult social care services.
- 4.2 Enquiries can escalate into complaints if they are not dealt with satisfactorily or in a timely manner. At first contact the Complaints Service provides or arranges answers or explanations to resolve the issues raised.
- 4.3 Typically, enquiries managed by the complaint service are contacts from members of the public, including the children, young people or adults who use our services, who may wish to complain but we can deal with their concerns immediately; or from people who have a specific question about our services; or from people who are not sure who to contact or who believe we are the responsible body.
- 4.4 In the course of 2020/21, 96 enquiries were recorded by the team that related to adult services.
- 4.5 The majority of these enquiries related to our services and were dealt with directly by the team. These included instances where issues could be signposted elsewhere so that the person was put in touch with expert staff. Sometimes service users contacted us to make comments or suggestions which were passed on to relevant services or used to help improve services.
- 4.6 The table below notes the enquiries received by service area:

Enquiries received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Adult social care	102	118	96	↓

Enquiries by service area	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Care management	58	72	52	↓
Complaints team	1	X	X	→
Continuing healthcare	6	1	7	↑
Contracts & commissioning	X	1	6	↑
Finance	8	9	14	↑
General	X	1	X	↓

Home improvement service	X	1	3	↑
Independent social care providers	5	6	2	↓
In-house residential care	X	X	1	↑
Joint equipment and loan service	6	5	X	↓
Northumbria Healthcare	X	3	1	↓
Occupational therapy	9	7	4	↓
Onecall	1	2	X	↓
Other organisations	2	2	4	↑
Safeguarding adults	4	3	1	↓
Self-directed support team	X	3	1	↓
Short term support service	2	2	X	↓
Total	102	118	96	↓

- 4.8** Each enquiry can take anything from a matter of minutes to several hours to complete. Many enquiries are dealt with over one to two working days.
- 4.9** Some enquiries contain information that was handled under either adults or children's multiagency safeguarding procedures, especially information relating to independent providers. In these cases we let the enquirer know that they should contact the complaints team after the safeguarding process is complete if they remain dissatisfied with the outcomes.
- 4.10** Analysis suggests that the majority of people are making contact with the right organisation first time when they have a query or concern. This suggests that our publicity is effective.

5. Adult social care compliments received in 2020/21

- 5.1 Adult social care receives considerably more compliments from people who use our services, their carers and families than complaints. Compliments are a way of confirming that by and large we are doing a good job.
- 5.2 Collectively, the compliments we receive are mainly about how helpful, kind and professional staff have been; or about the quality of the services we commission or provide. Staff are encouraged to acknowledge compliments especially when people have taken the time and trouble to write at what may have been very difficult periods of their lives, including end of life care.
- 5.3 In 2020/21 adult social care received 536 compliments from members of the public although we are very aware that staff receive kind words verbally from the people who use our services, their families and carers on a daily basis.
- 5.4 As part of our on-going work in adult social care, to monitor how well our contracted providers are performing we ask them to report both complaints and compliments each quarter.
- 5.5 Overall, adult social care compliments have increased over the past year and continuing healthcare compliments similarly. Analysis suggest that this increase has been achieved by our independent providers whose efforts during the pandemic have been greatly appreciated. In-house day services by contrast have seen a reduction in compliments due to being suspended for much of the same period.
- 5.6 The table below shows the number of compliments received over the past three years:

Compliments received by	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Adult social care	485	442	536	↑
CHC	159	117	157	↑
Total	664	559	693	↑

- 5.7 The table below shows adult social care compliments received by three county councils referred to above, based on the available data:

Complaints received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Durham	125	81	66	↓

- 5.8 The two tables below show the compliments received by service area over the past three years:

Compliments by service area	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
Care management	94	110	74	↓
Complaints Service	2	3	2	↓
Contracts & commissioning team	X	2	X	↓
Finance	8	5	2	↓
Home improvement service	1	2	X	↓
Home safe	2	4	8	↑
Independent providers*	194	145	334	↑
In-house day services	61	59	1	↓
Joint equipment and loan service	4	2	3	↑
Occupational therapy	24	24	31	↑
Onecall (single point of access)	5	6	22	↑
Risk & independence team	X	1	1	→
Safeguarding adults team	4	4	1	↓
Self-directed support team	7	4	1	↓
Short term support service	78	70	56	↓

Welfare rights	1	1	X	
Total	485	442	536	

***Reported by providers**

CHC compliments*	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Trend
100% NHS funded packages	64	48	68	
Part NHS funded packages	95	69	89	
Total	159	117	157	

***Reported by providers**

6. Advocacy for adult social care and CHC complainants

- 6.1** In respect of advocacy for people wishing to make an adult social care complaint, the Complaints Service is always mindful that on occasion the use of an advocate may be a constructive way to support the complainant to achieve a positive outcome from their complaint. Advocacy is not a right under the regulations for adult social care complaints.
- 6.2** The Complaints Service is able to access advocacy for adult social care complaints from local providers as necessary and with the agreement of the complainant. Decisions are made on a case by case basis. Please note that many complaints about adult social care come from a family member or family friend on behalf of the service user. In each case we ask for the service user's consent unless they lack the mental capacity to make a complaint in their own right; in these cases we make a best interest decision.

CHC complaints

- 6.3** In respect of advocacy for people who wish to make a complaint about CHC funded care packages the complainant has a right to advocacy if they so choose and we signpost people to the relevant contracted provider.

Other information

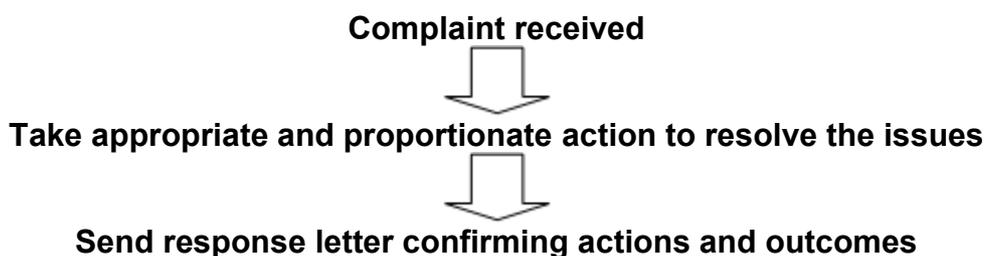
- 6.4** In general terms and irrespective the different advocacy arrangements in place the Complaints Service considers how to meet the varying needs of complainants on a case by case basis making reasonable adjustments as appropriate. This is particularly important in relation to complainants whose first language is not English and those with communication difficulties.

7. Conclusions and future plans for adult social care complaints

- 7.1 We continue to be guided by the aim of responding to complaints in an appropriate and proportionate manner, understanding the perspective of each child, young person or adult that makes a complaint and where possible aiming to resolve things at an early opportunity.**
- 7.2 We also continue to learn lessons, to make changes to improve things for individuals and their families, and to draw on what we learn to improve our services more generally.**
- 7.3 Over the coming year, 2021/22 we will continue to improve accessibility to make compliments, complaints and comments and the ways in which we demonstrate learning from complaints. As part of our other development work we will continue to work alongside contracted adult social care providers to report on all their registered compliments and complaints regardless of funding arrangements. As noted above, we are also working to better understand the issue of charging and complaints to determine what changes, if any, may be needed to systems, processes, and/or training programmes.**
- 7.4 We will continue to focus on handling enquiries promptly to try to prevent unnecessary escalation and dissatisfaction.**
- 7.5 We will also continue to support managers in resolving complaints at a local level and in a timely manner by help in individual cases and complaints training as appropriate.**
- 7.6 Overall, and despite the challenges of lockdown and increased home working, we have had a positive year with many compliments received and enquiries dealt with at an early stage. We have successfully resolved the majority of issues raised locally even when we have not been able to agree with the complainant's perspective. However, we always speak to people to hear their views and take their concerns very seriously. We are committed to improving our services and continue to receive support from staff and managers throughout the organisation in our day to day work.**
- 7.7 For further information about this report or adult social care and CHC complaints, please email the Complaints Manager for Adult Social Care Complaints james.hillery@northumbria-healthcare.nhs.uk and from 01 October 2021 james.hillery@northumberland.gov.uk**

8.0 How we handle individual adult social care and CHC complaints

- 8.1 We work to the principle in that all feedback is welcomed, is taken seriously, complaints are investigated thoroughly and a response provided in a timely manner. We aim to learn lessons from all feedback and utilise findings to influence and improve services going forward.
- 8.2 The adult social care the 2009 complaints regulations require us to send an acknowledgment to the complainant within 3 working days. The regulations also say we must “investigate the complaint in a manner appropriate to resolve it speedily and efficiently”. The process should be person-centred with an emphasis on outcomes and learning.
- 8.3 To this end when we receive a complaint and in discussion with the complainant and the service, we develop a ‘resolution plan’ which may be refreshed as required.
- 8.4 The action we take to resolve a complaint should be appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances of the case, taking into account risk, seriousness, complexity or sensitivity of events. The officers tackling the complaint should not feel limited about the actions they can take but they should avoid lengthening the process. For example, a well-meant apology or an opportunity to meet and discuss the issues may suffice. Alternatively, the complaint may warrant a ‘formal’ investigation. Whatever the case we should always speak to the complainant to understand their experience and to ask them what they would like us to do in order to put things right. We should also keep them informed of progress and of any findings throughout their complaint.
- 8.5 The process ends with a final written response from the appropriate manager in which the complainant is directed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied with how we have handled their complaint or with our findings.
- 8.6 While there are no statutory timeframes, we aim to resolve complaints within 20 working days where practicable. Of the complaints responded to over 2019/20, 55% (35 of 63) were dealt with within 20 working days across adult social care and CHC complaints; and all were provided within the timeframe agreed with the complainant.
- 8.7 Our adult services process can be summarised as follows:



8.8 Apologising is usually appropriate even if only because the person feels they have had a bad experience or because they felt strongly enough about their experience that they felt moved to make a complaint. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman says, “A meaningful apology can help both sides calm their emotions and move on to put things right. It is often the first step to repairing a damaged relationship. It can help to restore dignity and trust. It says that both sides share values about appropriate behaviour towards each other and that the offending side has regrets when they do not behave in line with those values.”

PART TWO

Annual Complaint Report for Children's Social Care 2019/20

1.0 Introduction

Children's Services aim to provide high quality services and customer care at all times. However, it is appreciated that service users may, from time to time, be unhappy with the service they receive and wish to express their dissatisfaction with those services. Children's Services are happy to receive this feedback and investigate where something may have gone wrong and have an opportunity to put it right, so far as is possible. This process can provide vital points of learning for the Service and lead to necessary improvements.

The Service also welcomes comments, compliments, and suggestions to provide a broad and balanced feedback of service user experiences.

1.1 Covid Response

Children's Services rose to an unprecedented challenge in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and completely re-evaluated their way of working. The work of the Client Relations Team, who deal with complaints and customer feedback in relation to Children's Services was also impacted with all team members working from home and adjusting to provision of service via the virtual world.

The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 made some temporary change to the complaint regulations but only in relation to Stage 3 Review Panel hearings in that the timeframes for requesting and holding the Review Panels, usually within 30 working days, was changed to "as soon as is reasonably practicable". It also changed the requirements relating to the completion of the panel notes and undertaking of panel recommendations to "as soon as reasonably practicable."

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) suspended all casework activity on new or existing complaints from 26/3/2020 to 29/06/2020 to try and assist local authorities adjust to the new working arrangements.

Some complaints were impacted due to the closure of the archive facilities as this impacted access to written archived records.

1.2 Requirement for an Annual Report

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 require the submission of an Annual Report by every local authority which "provides a mechanism by which the local authority can be kept informed of the operation of its complaints procedure." This report has been prepared by the Complaints Manager in conjunction with Regulation requirements and provides data and analysis of information in relation to the complaints made to Children's Services and those referred to the LGSCO. This information is produced with the aim of providing intelligence to show where lessons can be learned and service improvements may be required.

The data used for this report is from received during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

1.3 Making a complaint

Full information on how to make a complaint or provide feedback is available on the Council website.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Compliments.aspx>

Children's Services staff ensure that all children of an appropriate age, who are in receipt of services as a Looked After Child, are provided with a copy of a complaints leaflet. Information is also readily available to children and young people via the Council website and the Mind of My Own app.

In order to raise a concern or make a complaint, children, young people, their parents/carers/guardians/appropriate adult may:

- talk to the relevant support staff to let them try and resolve the issue with them direct;
- Email the clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk team
- Write to the Complaints Manager for Children's Services at County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
- Telephone the Client Relations Team on 01670 628888
- Use the Mind of My Own app.

2.0 Numbers and Analysis

2.1 Complaints received

2.2 The table below shows how many complaints have been recorded for Children's Services (both social care and education) and under which process, broken down into individual financial years. The figures demonstrate a decrease in those recorded under the social care process and an increase in those recorded under the corporate process. This is due to reconsideration by this Council of the way in which complaints are considered from the outset.

Year	Social Care	Corporate	Total
2018/19	44	2	46
2019/20	46	4	50
2020/21	33	14	47

2.3 A greater number of complaints are now being received from adults in relation to their involvement with children's social care where their dissatisfaction relates solely to the impact on themselves and not the child. Where it is clear the adult complaining is not doing so on behalf of or in relation to a child but still require a response, then they are considered under the corporate process. [Getting the Best from Complaints statutory guidance; Sections 2.7 and 2.8] .

- 2.4 Of the 47 complaints received, only 1 was from a young Looked After person.
- 2.5 It is generally understood that children and young people tend to raise concerns through the many other routes available to them. This includes their allocated social worker, IRO, through care team meetings or advocates. From reviewing the data provided by the individual residential units, most of the issues raised are more related to day to day issues within the units rather than service processes or procedures, for example complaints have been recorded regarding how staff have dealt with a disagreement between residents. It is evidenced that the issues have all been dealt with promptly and effectively.
- 2.6 Statistically, our Units have recorded the following for 2020/21.

Unit	Complaints 2019/20	2020/21
Barndale	0	0
Coanwood	0	5
Kyloe	24	44
Phoenix	2	1
Thorndale	4	4

- 2.7 Although the figures look high for Kyloe House and there has been a significant increase in the last year; it is considered that this is due firstly to this being a secure children's home who are dealing with the most challenging of young people unhappy with their situation. Complaints have included, for example, issues about food standards and staff touching washing.
- 2.8 Secondly, it is considered that the increase in complaints this year is due to the Covid restrictions which have presented an additional and significant challenge for the young people. They have been unable to have family visits or go out on activities and a great many of our young people have understandably struggled with this.
- 2.9 All complaints regarding internal issues have been recorded and investigated and of the 44 complaints received, all matters were resolved satisfactorily without the need for further escalation to the formal complaints procedure.
- 2.10 A total of 10 complaints were received for the other residential units. All were dealt with promptly, fully investigated and resolved to the satisfaction of the young people involved without need for further escalation.

2.11 Formal Complaints resolved at Stage 1

- 2.12 Of the 47 complaints received during 2020/21 (33 social care and 14 corporate); 4 were not progressed (3 social care and 1 corporate). Reasons for not progressing a complaint include the complainant being involved in a concurrent investigation such as court proceedings (Regulation 8) or being outside the 12 month timescale for making a complaint (Regulation 9). A complaint can also be refused if there is a more appropriate, alternate process such as an appeal or Tribunal.

Of the 43 complaints that were accepted and then progressed;

- 1 complaint was subsequently withdrawn by the complainant;
- 1 complaint has been placed on hold at the complainant's request;

12 were partially upheld;
11 were fully upheld; and
18 of these complaints were not upheld.

2.13 Significant work is now being undertaken by the department to improve the quality of investigation and response provided at Stage 1 to increase customer satisfaction, embrace a learning culture from customer feedback and to reduce overall costs that independent investigations inevitably incur.

2.14 Complaints escalated to Stage 2

2.15 Of the 43 complaints taken forward during 2020/21, only 3 complaints have been escalated to Stage 2. One of these complaints was corporate and therefore followed the corporate process which involved a senior manager undertaking a review of the investigation and outcomes at Stage 1. The remaining 2 have been dealt with under the statutory children's regulations via independent investigation.

2.11 Complaints escalated to Stage 3 - Review Panels

2.12 Of the complaints recorded during 2020/21 only one was escalated to Stage 3 Review Panel.

2.13 The purpose of the Review Panel is to consider the standard and quality of investigation undertaken at Stage 2, highlight any problems in that investigation and to provide the complainant with an opportunity for further reconsideration of their complaint points. The Review Panel can offer further suggestion on remedy for the Council to consider.

2.14 Due to Covid-19 restrictions and in accordance with The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, there was some delay in progressing the Stage 3 Review Panels, however, arrangements for these meetings to be held virtually have been progressed.

2.16 Complaint response timescales

2.17 At Stage 1 children's social care complaints should be responded to within 10 working days, with an extension to 20 working days in certain circumstances. For the 2020/21 year where 29 social care complaints were accepted and taken forward, the response figures are as below:

9 were responded to within 10 working days;
11 were responded to within 20 working days; and
9 took over 20 working days to respond to.

2.18 This demonstrates that 69% of social care complaints were responded to within statutory timescales. Of the remaining 9 that went over timescales, further extensions were agreed with the complainant and were done to continue attempts to agree a suitable way forward in terms of remedy.

2.19 At Stage 1 of the corporate complaint process, complaints should be responded to within 15 working days.

2.20 For the 2020/21 year where 13 corporate complaints were accepted and progressed, the response figures are as below:

5 were responded to within the 15 working days;
8 took over 15 working days to respond to.

2.21 Again where delay was a factor, communications with the complainant were clear regarding why and when response could be expected.

2.19 It should be noted that focus within any complaint process remains very much on resolution. Whilst timescales are extremely important and should be adhered to, particularly within the statutory complaint processes, every effort is made to attempt satisfactory resolution and delays are often experienced due to the availability of either officers or the complainant to meet direct to discuss or due to extended deliberations on resolution. Complainants are kept informed of any delay, the reason for it and when they can expect a further update.

2.20 Complaint response at Stage 2

2.22 At Stage 2, children's statutory legislation states that complaints following the statutory process should be responded to within 25 working days or 65 working days depending on complexity, etc. All complaints at stage 2 within Northumberland have been extended to the 65 working day timeframe due to various issues including complexity of the complaint, the number and availability of staff to be interviewed, contact having to be made with former employees, Covid restrictions and availability of complainants and IO/IP.

2.23 Three complaints recorded in 2020/21 have been escalated to Stage 2. One was a corporate complaint relating to an admissions complaint and therefore not within the statutory process. This corporate complaint was responded to within the 20 working day timeframe agreed for the corporate process. The complaint was not escalated further.

2.24 The two complaints escalated for independent investigation within the children's process are ongoing, with one nearing adjudication stage.

2.25 Complaint response at Stage 3

2.26 Only statutory social care children's complaints can be escalated to Stage 3. This involves 3 independent panellists sitting on a Review Panel to consider the investigations and findings at Stage 2 to ensure the process has been followed correctly, the investigation has been robust and the findings logical and fair.

2.27 Although no complaints taken during 2020/21 have escalated to Stage 3, a total of 3 complaints from the previous year 2019/20 were considered during this financial year. The Review Panels were put on hold at the beginning of 2020/21 due to Covid preventing face to face meetings and the facility for full virtual meetings to be held not being fully confirmed.

2.28 All 3 Review Panels were completed during 2020/21. The Review Panels are the last opportunity for the Council to rectify any issues identified and despite

negotiations for suitable remedy all 3 complainants escalated their concerns to the LGSCO.

3.0 External review

3.1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 3.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) look at complaints about Local Authorities once a complaint has completed all stages of the Local Authority complaint process. If a complaint has not been considered by a Local Authority, the LGSCO will usually refer it back to the Authority to look into and class this as a “premature” complaint. They are independent of all Government departments and have the same powers as the High Court to obtain information and documents. If they find the Authority has done something wrong they will make recommendations to put things right.
- 3.3 The LGSCO produce an Annual Letter in relation to every Local Authority to indicate how many complaints have been received during the year, with the outcome of each complaint and an indication of how each Local Authority has performed. All information can be found via

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>

- 3.4 The 2020/21 Annual Letter indicates that the LGSCO received 11 complaints in relation to NCC Education and Children Services during 2020/21 and have also issued 11 decision notices; 2 complaints were Upheld; 4 were closed after initial enquiries; 4 were referred back to NCC for consideration (known as premature referral to the LGSCO) and 1 was deemed invalid/incomplete.
- 3.5 Of the 2 complaints that were Upheld; the LGSCO were satisfied that NCC had already appropriately remedied 1 of the complaints.
- 3.6 The LGSCO website only publishes the decision notices where an assessment has been undertaken by them, therefore only 6 of the complaints received in relation to Northumberland County Council were assessed and decisions published.
- 3.7 A comparison has been undertaken on the statistics available on the LGSCO website to other similar authorities (as determined by LGSCO). The comparison to the available comparators is below:

Council	Closed after initial enquiry	Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
Northumberland	4	2	0	6
Durham	10	4	1	15
Middlesbrough	6	1	4	7
Nottinghamshire	12	6	2	20

- 3.8 The LGSCO are encouraging local authorities not to become too fixated on the numbers of complaints received and instead focus on outcomes and remedies as they believe that is a true marker of complaint performance.
- 3.9 Top level information provided on LGSCO’s website shows the Council’s performance in its entirety across all departments and not specifically in relation to

children’s services. However, the figure shown indicates that **45%** of complaints they received and investigated in relation to Northumberland County Council were upheld. Their information advised that this compared to an average of **63%** in similar authorities.

- 3.10 The LGSCO also acknowledged that they were satisfied Northumberland County Council had successfully implemented their recommendations in all cases considered (**100%**). They confirmed this compared to an average of **99%** in similar authorities.
- 3.10 In the final top level comparator identified by the LGSCO, it confirmed that Northumberland County Council had provided satisfactory remedy before the case reached the Ombudsman in **20%** of complaints received. This compared to an average of **10%** in similar authorities.
- 3.11 This would indicate that NCC are performing well in terms of complaint handling and consideration.

4.0 Categorisation of Complaints

- 4.1 When complaints are recorded, the Client Relations Team assess and determine the nature of the complaint and what the content relates to. Complaints often involve multiple areas or categories of complaint and therefore the numbers are higher than the number of complaints actually received. For example, one complaint could be about a delay in service but also include an element regard a potential data protection breach. This is now being recorded.
- 4.2 The following table indicates how the complaints were categorised according to the content and nature of the complaint being made.

Category	2019/20	2020/21
Communications/Information	8	22
Delay in Service	1	4
Failure to follow policy/procedure	2	5
Standard of service	20	17
Staff manner/attitude	0	3
Breach of confidentiality	6	2
policy	0	1
Issue with social worker	6	4
Disagree with officer decision	7	1

- 4.3 Communication is now the subject of the largest number of complaints, however, this can be somewhat accounted for by the big change over the last year in the use of electronic communications (text message/teams meetings/instant messenger/What’s App, etc). There is somewhat of an unrealistic expectation from a lot of service users that the allocated social worker should respond in the same instant fashion when they message through these platforms. This is not always possible and it is about managing customer expectations from the outset. This is being tackled in lessons learned.

5.0 Lessons learned

- 5.1 During the past 2 years the Council focus has been very much around using the learning from complaints and other feedback to identify where service improvements may be required. This could take the form of individual staff or team training/supervision or departmental process change.
- 5.2 During 2020/21 a Working Group was created to:
- identify patterns and trends from complaints
 - identify learning from complaints and how this will be disseminated.
 - ensure actions identified within the outcomes of complaints are followed up and it is recorded when actions are completed.
- 5.3 Information is gathered by the Complaints Working Group on a monthly basis and reported to Children's Services Senior Leadership Team (CSCLT). The information and themes for learning are also reported on a quarterly basis to the Quality and Performance Audit Group (QPAG).
- 5.5 Findings within complaint investigations have been used to create a plan for service improvements for the forthcoming year including steps to improve the following:
- Managing communications with parents/service users more effectively in light of the increased use of instant messaging during the pandemic.
 - Working with non-resident parents to ensure they are kept up to date with progress in their child's case.
 - Improved recording to evidence decision making in cases.
 - Improved recording to evidence discussions and follow up to queries by parents/ carers.
 - Improved information regarding framework being operated within and how this is communicated with parents to ensure they understand this e.g if a parent signs section 20 what this means.
 - Recognising and involving necessary outside support agencies, such as domestic abuse workers in parenting assessments.
 - Provide feedback from meetings and distribution of minutes.
- 5.6 A programme of training to address all findings and improve service practice has been created.

6.0 Compliments

- 6.1 Examples of good practice can also be obtained from positive feedback received. All compliments received into the department are recorded and fed back to management. This year 59 compliments have been recorded taken from feedback provided by service users, parents/representatives and other professionals.
- 6.2 Whilst many related to support provided in general and the positive outcomes from the involvement of Children's Services; others related to the quality of specific pieces of work and how this quality was quantified. Any good examples are taken forward to use within training materials.

6.3 Anonymised examples from the compliment received are provided below.

- [Social worker] has really gone out of her way to ensure that everything has been done well for the young person meaning the young person has been able to go and live with family. This has been a complex case and the court process has not been easy. [Social worker] has confronted every problem head on and dealt with it. [Social worker] has gone over and above which should be recognised.
- [Parent] remains positive about future supports from Children's Services and [social worker] has helped change their view of Children's Social Care.
- The quality of [foster carer's] care and dedication to meeting [young person] needs has been outstanding..Throughout the care proceedings and while awaiting their move [foster carer] has never failed to advocate for them, build life story work where there has been little material from the birth family and celebrate their short life. [Foster carer] always produced excellent detailed written reports for Looked After Review meetings and gave a real sense of fully understanding the young persons needs. [Foster carer] also tried to build a positive relationship with the birth parents and has given a clear and independent view of what was in [young person's] best interests particularly when the panel date to decide [young person's] future was delayed. This was done very professionally and in my view [foster carer] was right. [Foster carer] is a carer we should all celebrate; a huge asset to Northumberland Children's Services and to the children placed in her care.
- The Judge repeatedly expressed thanks to [social worker] for the work done. [Social worker] pitched and facilitated the introductions between [young person] and [parent] really well; which enabled them both to establish and build on their relationship and has ultimately resulted in the best possible outcome for [young person]. [Social worker] is to be commended for their hard work.
- Excellent quality of [social worker] report and presentation to this morning's ICPC. [Social worker] summarised their concerns and their involvement including the history of past harm. This was a challenging case that required considerable preparation and tenacity to engage the family. [Social worker] engaged the family well; getting them to attend the meeting where they were able to participate. The ICPC was conducted using Signs of Safety material and analysis but due to work by [social worker] the meeting was flexible and smart enough to do this in a way the parents understood. [Social worker] and a good plan which should really help you achieve some positive outcomes for the child.
- Massive thank you to [family first officer] for your involvement. Without you and your work I wouldn't be where I am now. You've taught me so much, this whole thing has given me so much growth & taught me lessons that will last me a life time I am so proud of myself for how far I've come. The kids have been removed from child protection. From the bottom of my heart I thank you so much you truly are amazing at what you do.
- I would first of all like to thank [Early Help worker] from the bottom of my heart for all support with my family over the last 6 months , this [early help worker] is an absolute asset to your team it's rare to meet someone so committed to their job

and it certainly shows how dedicated they are to helping people. I can't ever thank the worker enough so again from the bottom of my heart I wanna thank the early help team for all your input and support I couldn't of got through all of this without you, you've been a god send to my family.

- Anti social behaviour in the Ashington area has been in decline and this is believed to be due to the work of the detached youth project in that area. Well done from Northumbria Police.

7.0 Summary

- 7.1 Lessons learned will remain the focus of this department to make sure service provision is continually reviewed and improved moving forward. This supports the ethos and focus of both OFSTED and the LGSCO. In addition to complaint and enquiry information, the department will be looking at compliments received in order to capture where there are examples of good practice and promote these within the department.
- 7.2 Training will also continue to be provided across the department regarding both complaint processes to improve complaint knowledge and handling in general. The Complaints Manager is engaging with new managers to the department and also attending individual team meetings to promote positive complaint interaction and investigations.

8.0 Further information regarding complaints

- 8.1 Should further information be required in relation to any aspect of this report or the handling of children's social care complaints, please do not hesitate to contact the Complaints Manager for Children's Services on 01670 628888 or via email clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk
- 8.2 Information can also be found on the Council website www.northumberland.gov.uk

Northumberland County Council

Family and Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2021 - 2022

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Chris Angus, Scrutiny Officer
01670 622604 - Chris.Angus@Northumberland.gov.uk

03 August 2021 - CA

Agenda Item 9

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) To monitor, review and make recommendations about:

- Early Years
- Education and Schools
- Special education needs and disability
- Adult and Community Education
- Training and Vocational Education
- Lifelong Learning
- Youth Offending
- Social Services for Children and Young People
- Children's Health
- Teenage Sexual Health
- Looked After Children
- Safeguarding – Children
- Youth Services
- Family Services
- Children's Centres

(b) To oversee and monitor school improvement, as follows:

- (i) To receive feedback on the Ofsted inspection of schools.
- (ii) To support the work of the County Council and the progress of schools on the School Intervention and Support Programme in specified categories.
- (iii) To receive an annual report about the number of schools that have been on the School Intervention and Support Programme, the reason(s) for their inclusion, the support given by the Council and the success of this support.
- (iv) To receive an annual report on the performance of schools.

ISSUES TO BE SCHEDULED/CONSIDERED

Regular updates:

Safeguarding Activity Trends Report
Finance and Performance Six Monthly Report
Children Permanently Excluded from School/Elective Home Education
Schools performance
Joint Targeted Area Inspection

Issues to be raised:

Themed Scrutiny:

Issues to be scheduled:

School Capital Investment
Children Permanently Excluded from School/Elective Home Education

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Work Programme 2021 - 2022**

2 September 2021

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Schools Forum Summary of Decisions taken:
Spring Term

Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 - Adult social care, children's social care, and continuing health care services

SEND Revisit

Care Leavers Action Plan

Report into the decisions taken by school's forum during the spring term. Request by the Committee.

Annual report on complaints and lessons learnt within Children's social care. Committee to identify any further areas for scrutiny.

Update to Committee on the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection.

An update on the Care Leavers action planning following an inspection in 2018. A report on the improvements to the service was last presented in June 2019.

7 October 2021

PRE-SCRUTINY:- School Organisation Plan for 2021 – 2024

Finance and Performance report

Children's Services Self-Assessment

A refresh of the school organisation plan. The Committee has received regular updates on this plan and will continue to monitor it throughout 2021 – 2024. The Committee's comments will be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 7 October 2021.

Regular report into the financial position and performance metrics of the service. The Committee is to receive assurance and identify any further areas for scrutiny.

Report on Children's Services Self-Assessment outcomes

	Children's Home Placement Sufficiency NE submission to the Care Review	Report on the number of places in homes for looked after Children
4 November 2021		
2 December 2021		
January 2022		
Page 81	Schools Forum Summary of Decisions taken: Autumn Term	Report into the decisions taken by school's forum during the Autumn term. Request by the Committee
3 February 2022		
	PRE-SCRUTINY:- School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/2024 Academic Year	Annual pre-scrutiny report on school admissions arrangements. The Committee's comments will be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 8 February 2022.
3 March 2022		

	<p>Director of Education Annual Report: Key Educational Outcomes (2020-2021 Academic Year)</p> <p>Safeguarding Activity Trend</p> <p>CIS Benchmarking Annual Report</p>	<p>Annual report on the key educational outcomes of the previous academic year. The Committee will be asked to identify any further areas for scrutiny.</p> <p>To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.</p> <p>To inform members of how Northumberland compares with other areas in 2020/21 based on provisional data in the field of children in need and child protection.</p>
7 April 2022		

Northumberland County Council
Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2021-2022

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1	17 June 2021	Impact of COVID pandemic on SEND services	RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and the support provided over this period be recognised.	Further report to come to the committee on CYPS, waiting times and impact of COVID of children's mental health.
2	17 June 2021	Winter Support Grant Update	RESOLVED that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The content of the report and the successful implementation of the initiatives undertaken with the funding from the Winter Support Grant be noted. 2. The strategy, roll-out and benefits of the activities for children and young people organised through the Holiday Activity Fund across Northumberland during the Easter Holiday be noted. 	No further action

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