

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: Wednesday, 26 January 2022

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 **MEETING SPACE - BLOCK 1, FLOOR 2 - COUNTY HALL** on **THURSDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2022** 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, D Carr, A Dale, W Daley (Chair), R Dodd (Vice-Chair), C Dunbar, L Dunn, M Swinburn, T Thorne and A Watson

A Hodgson, L Houghton, D Lennox, P Rickeard and J Sanderson

Any member of the press or public may view the proceedings of this 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 round 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)

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 6 January 2022, as circulated, to be confirmed as a true record and be signed by the Chair.

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 of 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
- 10)

To note the latest Forward Plan of key decisions for February to May 2022. Any further changes made to the Forward Plan will be reported to the committee.

5. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR THE 2023/2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

(Pages
11 - 56)

The report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/24 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2021. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought. Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the item on 8 February 2022.

6. VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021

(Pages
57 - 78)

The report provides members with the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report for 2020-21.

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|------------|--|-------------------------|
| 7. | NORTHUMBERLAND STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN NORTHUMBERLAND | (Pages
79 - 122) |
| | The report provides Members with an overview of the work by the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership 2020-21. | |
| 8. | ANNUAL REPORT FOR LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE 2020/21 | (Pages
123 -
134) |
| | The annual report for Learning and Skills Service is provided to highlight the performance during the academic year 2020/21; present the work of the Careers Guidance Team and provides an understanding of the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service. The Learning and Skills Service contains a number of specialist skills and support areas and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as training in the workplace. | |
| 9. | CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2022 - 24 | (Pages
135 -
168) |
| | The report is presented to outline the key issues, challenges in relation to placement sufficiency for children in care. | |
| 10. | CHILDREN'S HOMES BUILD PROGRESS | (Pages
169 -
174) |
| | The report provides Members with an update on the progress of the children's homes builds/plans. | |
| 11. | ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT | (Pages
175 -
180) |
| | The report provides an overview of the Annual Engagement Meeting (AEM) held with Ofsted in October 2021. | |
| 12. | OFSTED AND INSPECTION FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES | (Pages
181 -
188) |
| | The report informs Members of the range of inspections and external scrutiny that Ofsted and other inspectorates provide to local authority children services departments | |
| 13. | FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 | (Pages
189 -
198) |
| | Members are asked to review and note the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report. | |
| 14. | 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 1, Floor 2 - County Hall on Thursday, 6 January 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

W Daley (Chair) (in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

C Ball
R Dodd
T Thorne

D Carr
C Dunbar

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

A Hodgson
P Rickeard

D Lennox

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

L Houghton

J Sanderson

OFFICERS

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

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

G Reiter
D Street

ALSO PRESENT

A Dale

G Renner-Thompson

44 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Dunn, Scott, Swinburn and Taylor.

45 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on Thursday 4th November 2021 and Thursday 2 December 2021, as circulated, were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair

46 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Dodd advised that he was a Councillor on Ponteland Town Council who had responded on the proposals in respect of Atkinson House and whilst he had helped facilitate meetings, he had taken no part in any discussion related to the proposals.

47 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions for January to April 2022 had been shared with Members for information.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

48 **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE SEATON SLUICE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND WHYTRIG MIDDLE SCHOOL**

The report to Cabinet set out the outcomes of the informal consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Seaton Sluice Middle and Whytrig Middle School. A detailed introduction was provided by S Aviston, Head of School Resources and Organisation and comments made by this Committee would be reported to Cabinet on 11 January when a decision would be taken. Councillor Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Children's Service thanked all those who had responded to the consultation.

Having considered the response to the consultation, the Committee were happy with report and highlighted potential issues such as lack of infrastructure for such a large school. Members were keen to see the investment that was planned for the new schools be continued and that any needed repairs to Seaton Sluice Middle School were carried out in a timely manner. In response it was stated that funding had already been approved for the provision of a new mobile at Seaton Sluice and work would be undertaken as required, but the priority was replacement buildings for Astley High School and Whytrig Middle School due to their condition and ensuring completion of the business case in order to progress this.

One member expressed their disappointment at the outcome of the report but accepted the feedback from the public showed residents were not in favour of the proposal.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

The Cabinet report set out the outcomes of informal consultation on a proposal to relocate Atkinson House Special School to a former school site in Ponteland and to change the designation of the school to become co-educational. S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources provided a comprehensive introduction to the report advising that the consultation had arisen as a result of the need to provide additional places for young people, including girls, in Northumberland with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) in September 2022 as a result of the steady upward trend in the demand for special school places in the County. Councillor Renner-Thompson thanked those who had taken part in the consultation exercise advising that the County had an increasing need for SEMH places within the County. He referenced the inappropriate and offensive comments which had been received during the course of the consultation which had been removed from the register advising that these were of a highly offensive nature and were deplorable in the 21st century.

The Chair advised that a further letter had been received from the Church of England Diocese on 31 December following the publication of the report. Mr Rickeard, the Diocese representative, drew attention to the commentary on page 77 of the report which had raised concerns from the Newcastle Diocesan Board of Education (NDEB). The Committee was advised that the Board wished to make it clear that the two NDEB positions mentioned were filled by two nominated individuals, one of who was an officer who did not have a vote on such statements and the other was a Professor from the University of Sunderland who had declared an interest at the time of discussion of this report. He advised of the purpose of the NDEB and stated that whilst the NDEB always looked to consider the needs of the CoE schools, it was always done with consideration of the wider education and community interests in line with its charitable objectives. He advised that to suggest that the NDEB would be biased in supporting a Trust above its own charitable objectives was openly disparaging to both the Board and its Members who were skilled Trustees and had considered the proposals very carefully in light of the varying education, moral and safeguarding aspects involved. The Board had not had sight of the Pele Trust response and had not stated that it supported their objections, and had not itself objected to the proposals only made it clear that the safeguarding issues needed to be firmly addressed. The Chair of the NDEB had been personally offended by this section of the report and requested that this be removed and an apology be issued to the NDEB to avoid any further misrepresentation or suggestion of bias.

Mrs Aviston apologised to the Diocese for the interpretation of the comments originally made and advised that by the time the further response from the Diocese was received it was too late to retract the commentary that had been written, but this would be made clear when the report was considered at Cabinet. She advised that she had made it clear in her introduction to Members at this meeting that this was not an objection to the proposals but were concerns raised by the Diocese.

In response to concerns expressed by Members in relation to security, safeguarding, road safety, drop offs and the shared sporting areas the Chair advised that the purpose was to scrutinise the results of the informal consultation

and make a recommendation to Cabinet for their decision on whether to move to the more formal consultation stage and that a lot of concerns would be picked up during the formal consultation if this was agreed. Mrs Aviston advised that it was hoped to bring together all users in order to provide a design solution which was suitable for and safeguarded all users on the co-located site. Cabinet were also being asked to agree at risk funding for feasibility and design work to be undertaken parallel to the consultation on the Statutory proposal should it be agreed that this should be published.

In relation to concerns regarding the distance to be travelled by pupils attending the relocated school, Members were advised that there was currently no provision in the west of the County and this more central location could result in shorter travelling times for some pupils. It was further clarified that no child would be required to move to the Gilbert Ward school in Blyth once opened unless they wished to do so.

Co-opted members questioned whether the timeframe of September 2022 was achievable and whether having a design solution in place before the formal consultation started would help reassure residents of the viability of the proposal. It was agreed that September 2022 was a challenging date; however, members were told that the team felt this date was achievable. There would be a delay of approximately 6 weeks should work on the design solution have to be undertaken prior to the commencement of a statutory consultation. Officers felt that the design work currently being undertaken demonstrated a commitment and would be sufficient to demonstrate how the building would function. It was also clarified that other locations had been explored for the relocation of Atkinson House, but this suggested site was the most suitable for a number of reasons.

Members had their attention drawn to a comment from parents who highlighted the change to co-education would create better provision for girls at the school and would be more representative of the world into which the pupils would enter and so help to prepare them to be good citizens. Members raised problems with the perception of Atkinson House and felt the proposal was a step in the right direction for the children of Northumberland with SEMH needs.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

50 **NATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA AND 2022/23 SCHOOLS FUNDING**

The report provided information to update Cabinet on the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the implications for 2022/23 school funding within Northumberland. Comments made by this Committee would be reported to Cabinet when they considered the report on 11 January 2022. An introduction to the report was provided by S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources.

The Committee welcomed this annual report and the increase in funding. They were pleased to see the involvement and recommendations of the Schools' Forum. Attention was drawn to the changes to the way in which sparsity funding was calculated which was of benefit to our more rural schools and on which this Council had lobbied Government.

Assurance was sought and given that a falling roll fund was being investigated. Members were informed whilst it would only affect a small number of schools it would be a useful and welcomed fund for them.

RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.

51 **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2021/22**

The Scrutiny Officer advised that it had been agreed that the additional meeting proposed for Thursday 13 January 2022 was to be cancelled with the reports to be deferred to the scheduled meeting on Thursday 3 February 2022. As there would now be a large number of reports to be considered at this meeting a 9 am start time had been agreed with the Chair.

The work programme had been circulated for information and any issues which Members wished to bring to the Committee should be raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Officer in the first instance.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

52 **URGENT BUSINESS**

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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Forward Plan

FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS FEBRUARY TO MAY 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p>Revenues and Benefits Policies for 2022/23 The report sets out the policies that the Revenues and Benefits services operate for the administration of council tax, business rates, housing benefit and council tax support. The report is for information and approval of any updates or legislation changes that need to be made. (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes - 01670 624351)</p>	CSEG 7 February 2022	8 February 2022 Council 23 February 2022
<p>Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-25 The report presents the updated Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-25 to Cabinet following the receipt of the provisional local government settlement which is due to be announced during December 2021. The report will also include an update on the deliverability of savings. (R. Wearmouth/ A. Elsdon - 01670 622168)</p>	CSEG 7 February 2022	8 February 2022 Council 23 February 2022
<p>School Admission Arrangements The report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/24 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2021. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought.</p>	FACS 3 February 2022	8 February 2022

(G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)		
The Northumberland Line To confirm receipt of Restoring Your Railway (RYR) funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) (W. Ploszaj/S. McNaughton - 07827 873139) (Confidential report)	CSEG 7 February 2022	8 February 2022
Leisure Review – Phase 1 To request approval for the extension of the current Active Northumberland contract by twelve months to undertake a legal procurement exercise. The contract naturally expires on 31 March 2022 (J. Watson/ M. Taylor 01670 622430) (Confidential report)	TBC	8 February 2022
Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021 The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)	CSEG 7 March 2022	8 March 2022
Bus Service Improvement Plan/Enhanced Partnership For Cabinet to approve, subsequent to a prior consultation and objection period and statutory consultation period, the proposed Enhanced Plan and Scheme(s). The Enhanced Plan and Scheme is a proposed statutory partnership with regard to a statutory transport plan including the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Cabinet would have to approve prior to these being considered by the Joint Transport Committee on	C&P 2 March 2022	8 March 2022

<p>15 March 2022. The Enhanced Plan and Scheme (s) need to be approved by deadline imposed by Central Government of 1st April 2022. (W. Ploszaj/R. O'Farrell/H. Lancaster – 01670 623323)</p>		
<p>Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021 The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at 31 December 2021 for the Council against the Budget for 2021-22. (R. Wearmouth/S. Dent 01670 625515)</p>		8 March 2022
<p>Community Chest 2022/23 To consider proposed changes to the operation of the Community Chest scheme in line with recommendations made by Elected Members as part of the recent review of Local Area Councils. (B. Flux/T. Kirsop - 07917 266864)</p>	TBC	8 March 2022
<p>Final Decision on statutory proposals for Atkinson House This report sets out an analysis of the representations (responses) received from interested parties to the statutory proposal published in relation to prescribed changes for Atkinson House Special School in Seghill, a secondary provision for boys with Social, Emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in Northumberland during the four week statutory consultation that began on 13 January and closed on 10 February 2022. Cabinet will be required to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the prescribed changes set out in the</p>	FACS 3 March 2022	8 March 2022

<p>Statutory Proposal for implementation with effect from 1 September 2022. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)</p>		
<p>Blyth Relief Road To provide an update on progress made towards Blyth Relief Road and secure approval for next steps. The report will outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Route alignment proposals - Key information from the Outline Business Case <p>Next steps (W. Ploszaj/S. McNaughton 07827 873139)</p>	<p>11 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p>Financial Performance 2021-22 – Provisional Outturn 2021-22 The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at Provisional Outturn for the Council against the Budget for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/S. Dent 01670 625515)</p>		<p>7 June 2022</p>



Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Date: 11 February 2022

School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/2024 Academic Year

Report of the Executive Director of Adults and Children's Services Cath McEvoy-Carr
Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson, Children's Services
Report prepared by: Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources.

Purpose of report

This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/24 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2021. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought.

Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Note the outcomes of the six week consultation undertaken in relation to the Council's proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2023/24 that took place between 22nd November 2021 and 18th January 2022;
2. Approve the proposed co-ordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies, as provided in Appendix 1 of this report;
3. Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed oversubscription criteria and proposed admission numbers for First and Primary community and voluntary and controlled schools, as provided in Appendix 2 of this report;
4. Approve (determine) the proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary community and voluntary controlled schools, including sixth forms, as provided in Appendix 3 of this report.
5. Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Pegswood Primary School from 40 to 30, in view of current and future pupil numbers.
6. Approve a reduction of the Published Admission Number at Seaton Delaval First School from 45 to 30 in recognition that the continuing extent of parental

choice in the partnership means that in reality a PAN of 30 is more realistic and sustainable.

Key issues

1. On an annual basis the local authority needs to determine its school admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. As the Council's decision making body Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the arrangements for the academic year 2023/24.
2. There are no changes proposed to the current admission policies, including oversubscription criteria, for first, primary, middle, high and secondary schools for 2023/24. Full copies of these are contained in the appendices to this report.
3. Cabinet is asked to approve (determine) all the admission arrangements for 2023/24 in accordance with the Admissions Code 2021. Determination of the arrangements must be made by 28 February 2022 prior to publication on the Council's website and to allow for the submission of any objections regarding the arrangements to the School's Adjudicator by 15 May 2022.
4. Cabinet is asked to approve the draft admission arrangements for sixth forms, including the criteria for entry, the admission number (relating to external students to Year 12 only) and the over subscription criteria (that will be applied if there are more applicants than places available) for 2023/24.
5. The proposed consultation is non-contentious and if approved by Cabinet, it would commence on 25 February 2022 for 3 weeks. A consultation document would be published on the Council's website and Council officers would engage with relevant stakeholders appropriately to ensure relevant views and comments on the expansions are garnered. The outcome of this consultation would be reported to a further Cabinet meeting where a decision would then be requested as to whether or not to progress to the publication of the formal proposal, taking into account the outcomes of the informal consultation.

Admissions Arrangements Consultation Process and Outcomes

6. A six week consultation on the Council's proposed admissions arrangements for 2023/24 took place between 22nd November 2021 and 18th January 2022.
7. As required by the School Admissions Code, the full proposed admission arrangements were published on the Council's website for the whole of the consultation period, together with details of the person to whom comments could be sent. There were no areas specified on which comments could not be made.
8. Groups and persons consulted with as part of the consultation process were as follows:
 - Parents of children between the ages of 2 and 18, via website and communication from schools and nurseries;

- All Governing Bodies of voluntary controlled and community schools;
 - All Governing Bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies, who are their own admissions authority;
 - Neighbouring Local Authorities (Newcastle City Council; Cumbria County Council; Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council; North Tyneside Council; Durham County Council) and
 - The CE Diocese of Newcastle and Durham; the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
9. There were 2 responses received within the consultation period. The responses were received from Pegswood Primary and Seaton Delaval First schools with both governing bodies supported the proposal to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) at their schools. No Further comments were received during the consultation period although this is not unusual given that there aren't any proposed changes to the arrangements for 2023/24.

BACKGROUND

1. The School Admissions Code 2021 applies to all maintained mainstream schools, which includes voluntary controlled and community schools and schools that are their own admission authority. Academies are required to comply with the Code and the law relating to admissions as part of their funding agreements, although the Secretary of State may vary this requirement if there is a demonstrable need. The Local Authority does not have any decision making powers when it comes to the admission criteria to academies.
2. Admission authorities must ensure that their determined admission arrangements comply with the mandatory provisions of the Code. In order to promote fair access to educational opportunities, admission arrangements are subject to scrutiny by the Schools Adjudicator who has the power to impose arrangements on those authorities that do not meet the requirements of the Code.
3. When changes are proposed, admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements that will apply for admission applications the following year. Where no changes to admission arrangements are proposed, admission authorities need only consult once every 7 years. The admission arrangements must be formally approved each year.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy	The Admissions Policy enables all applications for school places to be prioritised in an open and fair way, ensuring that all schools and academies adopt lawful admission arrangements.
Finance and value for money	There are no direct financial implications as a result of these arrangements.
Legal	The admission arrangements comply with legislation.
Procurement	No implications
Human Resources	No implications
Property	No implications

Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	EIA attached at Appendix 4
Risk Assessment	The level of risk involved in the proposed amendment to the admissions numbers is perceived to be minimal.
Crime & Disorder	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
Customer Considerations	Parents can express a preference for schools and give their reasons in the light of the criteria within the admissions policies. As far as possible under the policies, parents will be allocated a place for their child at the school for which they have expressed a preference. Where this is not possible, and where parents live in the Northumberland County Council area, a place will be offered at an alternative school.
Carbon reduction	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications
Wards	All Northumberland Wards

CONSULTATION

A six week consultation on the Council's proposed admissions arrangements for 2023/24 took place between 22nd November 2021 and 18th January 2022.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Report Sign Off

Finance Officer	JW
Monitoring Officer/Legal	SB
Executive Director of Children's Services	CMC
Chief Executive	DL
Portfolio Holder(s)	GRT

Report Author: Sue Aviston Head of School Organisation and Resources
Sue.Aviston@northumberland.gov.uk

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Proposed coordinated admission scheme for all maintained schools and academies 2023/24
- Appendix 2 - Proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for First and Primary Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools – 2023/24
- Appendix 3 - Proposed admission arrangements, including proposed over subscription criteria and proposed admission numbers, for Middle, High and Secondary Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools – 2023/24, including sixth forms
- Appendix 4 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Coordinated admission scheme for maintained schools, including academies 2023/24

Note: The status of some schools listed in this document may be subject to change as a consequence of academy conversion or school organisational changes.

Introduction

All Local authorities are required by the School Admissions (Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 to have a scheme in place each year for co-ordinating admission arrangements for all maintained schools and academies (except special schools and nursery schools) within their area. The scheme has to comply with the provisions of the School Admissions Code 2021.

Coordination schemes are intended to simplify the admissions process whilst reducing the likelihood of any child being left without a school place. Coordination establishes a mechanism that ensures as far as is reasonably practicable that every parent of a child living in a local authority (LA) who has applied to a maintained school is sent a single offer of a school place by their LA.

Coordination schemes do not affect the rights and duties of the governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools to set and apply their own admissions arrangements and oversubscription criteria, nor for academies to agree their own arrangements with the Secretary of State. Admission authorities do not need to determine the same or similar oversubscription criteria, but must ensure that their own admission arrangements are compatible with and do not undermine the coordination scheme for their area.

The following coordinated admission scheme for Northumberland County Council will apply to the admission arrangements for the school year beginning September 2023.

Interpretation and glossary

In this Scheme –

"The LA" is Northumberland County Council acting in its capacity as a local (education) authority.

"The LA area" means Northumberland.

"School" means a community, voluntary controlled, foundation or voluntary aided school (but not a special school) which is maintained by the LA.

"Academy" means a state funded non fee paying independent school set up under a Funding Agreement between the Secretary of State and the proprietor of an Academy (most commonly and hereafter referred to as an Academy Trust). Academy Funding Agreements require Academies to comply with the Code and the law relating to admissions, though the Secretary of State has the power to vary this requirement where there is a demonstrable need. Academies include free schools and studio schools.

"Admission authority" in relation to a community or voluntary controlled school means the LA and, in relation to a foundation or voluntary aided school or an academy, means the governing body of that school.

"The specified year" is the school year beginning in September 2023.

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School Admissions Arrangements 2021/22, -

"Admission arrangements" are the determined arrangements which govern the procedures and decision making for the purpose of admitting pupils to a particular school or academy.

"Late application" means any application for a place in the first year of entry to the school that is received after the closing date for applications.

"Parent or carer" means any person who (as defined in the 1989 Children Act) holds parental responsibility for a child and with whom the child normally lives.

"Home authority" is the LA that a parent resides in.

The scheme

The scheme will apply to all first, primary, middle, secondary and high schools and academies in the LA area (except special schools and nursery schools) and shall take effect from 28 February 2022.

Under the coordinated scheme, Northumberland County Council will set and apply the oversubscription criteria for all community and voluntary controlled schools in the area. The governing bodies of voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies will set and apply their own oversubscription criteria.

The LA will work with all other admission authorities within Northumberland and with other relevant local authorities to ensure that a fair and transparent system for the allocation of places is achieved.

The normal admissions round

The scheme will apply to all children whose parents are seeking a school place for the school's initial year of entry for the start of Autumn term 2023 (whether or not it is their age cohort). The initial years of entry are:

School type or name Initial year of entry

<i>First and primary schools</i>	<i>Reception</i>
<i>Middle schools</i>	<i>Year 5</i>
<i>Secondary schools</i>	<i>Year 7</i>
<i>High schools</i>	<i>Year 9</i>

There will be a common application form available for all applicants, which will be available online and as a paper version. Online applications are encouraged as parents receive an immediate response to their application and they can accept their offer online.

The common application form must be used by parents who live in Northumberland as a means of expressing preferences for a school place for their child. All preferences expressed on the form are valid applications and they should be ranked in order of preference. Reasons to support each preference can be included on the form.

The form will specify the closing date and where the application form must be returned to. Completed forms must be returned to the LA before the closing date. The form will be accompanied by an explanation of the coordinated admissions scheme. This will explain that:

- the parent/carer will receive one single offer of a school place
- all preferences will be treated equally
- a place will be offered at the highest ranked school for which the child is eligible for a place under the admission criteria
- if more than one school could offer a place, the parent/carer will be regarded as having ranked the schools in the preference order appearing on the form
- if a place is unable to be offered at a preferred school, a place will be offered at the nearest school with available places based on the straight line distance from home to school.

The LA will take all reasonable steps to ensure that every parent resident in their area who has a child due to start primary education or is in their last year of first, primary or middle school is made aware of the procedures for applying for a school place and has access to a copy of the form and supporting guidance.

Verification of data

Parents may be asked to provide proof of address by the LA or by other admission authorities.

Supplementary information

Admission authorities can require parents to provide additional information where it is required for the governing body to apply its oversubscription criteria. Any requested information should be returned by the dates stated in order to be considered as part of the application.

Submission dates

The application period will open from **12 September 2022**.

31 October 2022, midnight, is the deadline for parents to apply to the LA for a place in a middle, secondary or high school or academy.

15 January 2023, midnight, is the deadline for parents to apply to the LA for a place in a reception class.

It is the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure that applications are returned directly to the home LA by the closing date.

Late applications

Any application for the normal admissions round received after the deadline will be deemed "late".

Late applications will be dealt with after all on-time applications have been processed and places allocated. Late applicants will not be made an offer on National Offer Day. They will be offered as part of the second waiting list process once offers have been accepted.

Only in exceptional limited circumstances will late applications be considered at the same time as applications submitted on time. These include:

- The illness/death of a close relative such that making an application during the application period was not possible.
- A move into Northumberland from outside the area after the deadline date. Confirmation of the new address must be provided (in the form of an exchange of contracts or a tenancy agreement).
- Where there has been a delay in the LA receiving the application due to an administrative error.
- Other circumstances to be considered and each case decided on its own merits.

Documentary evidence should be provided with the application to verify the circumstances which caused the application to be late. If evidence cannot be provided, the application will not be considered as an exception.

The LA will determine whether the late application is considered as an exception.

22 November 2022 is the deadline for asking for a late application for a place in a middle, secondary or high school or academy to be considered as an on time exception.

14 February 2023 is the deadline for asking for a late application for a reception place to be considered as an on time exception.

Changing preferences

No changes will be accepted to applications after the deadline date has passed, unless there is a genuine reason for the change, such as a change of address or siblings have changed schools. **The deadlines and evidence requirements are the same as for exceptional late applications, see above.** If these are not met, the request will not be considered as an exception.

Any request to change preferences will cancel out and replace the previous application. If submitted after the deadline date, and not agreed by the LA as an exception, this means the original application will be withdrawn by the LA, processed as late, and no offer will be made on National Offer Day. Places will be offered as part of the second waiting list process.

No form received

Where no form is submitted for a child known to the LA, a place will be offered at the nearest Northumberland school to the home address with a vacancy, measured in a straight line using an electronic (GIS) map measurement system. This may be a community, voluntary controlled, foundation or voluntary aided school or academy, if the admission authority agrees. However, places will not be offered on National Offer Day: they will be offered as part of the second waiting list process.

Processing applications

After the closing date the LA will forward details of relevant applications received on time to other admission authorities in its area and to other LAs if a preference is made for a school in another area. Late applications will be shared with other admission authorities after offer day.

Parental preferences will be ranked by every admission authority strictly according to the oversubscription criteria for the relevant school. The ranked lists will be returned to Northumberland LA by the specified date detailing how the oversubscription criteria have been applied to the list.

The order of school preference listed on the application form will not affect these rankings.

Determining offers

The LA will act as a clearing house for the allocation of places by the relevant admission authorities. The LA will only make a decision on the offer or refusal of a place in response to any preference expressed on the form where:

- it is acting in its separate capacity as an admission authority, or on behalf of another admission authority that has delegated its role to the LA, or
- an applicant is eligible for a place at more than one school, or
- an applicant is not eligible for a place at any school that the parent has nominated.

The LA, using preference data and oversubscription criteria rankings (including those from own admission authority schools and academies), will allocate places according to each parent's preference ranking as follows:

- Where a parent's first preference can be met, a place will be allocated at that school. The LA will not consider any lower ranked preferences.
- Where a parent's first preference cannot be met, but a lower preference can, a place will be allocated at the lower preference school. Any higher preference applications will be placed on the waiting list for that school(s) and ranked according to the oversubscription criteria. Any preferences ranked lower than the preference offered will not be considered.
- Where none of the parent's preferences can be met, a place will be allocated at the nearest school with available places based on the straight line distance from home to school. The applications for preferred schools will be placed on the waiting lists for those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Distance measurements

Distances are measured using the Council's electronic (GIS) map measuring system in a straight line distance from the front door of the home to the main gate of the school. Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Offers

Parents will receive one offer of a school place. Parents who applied online can log in on National Offer Day to find out their allocated school.

Parents who submitted a paper application will be posted a letter to arrive on National Offer Day. Information will not be given out over the telephone.

If a parent was refused a place at a preferred school, the letter or email (depending on how parent applied for their place) will explain why the place was refused and that the parent has the right of appeal.

Responding to offers

Parents are required to respond to the LA regarding the offer of a school place to either accept or refuse it within two weeks of National Offer Day. If the parent does not confirm to the LA that they accept the place, the LA may remove the place and reallocate it to another child.

Parents should not refuse a place unless they are certain of a place at an alternative school. This does not remove the parent's right of appeal.

If a parent wishes their child to be considered for an alternative school(s) after offer day, a new application must be completed listing the new order of preferences. This will cancel out and replace the previous application.

Waiting Lists

Children will be kept on a waiting list for any school ranked higher on their form than the school at which they were offered a place, for example, where a parent has been allocated a place at their second preference school, they may be placed on the waiting list of their first preference school but not their third.

Where a parent has been offered a place at a school they did not nominate on their form, they will be placed on the waiting list of all the schools they did nominate, and considered for places at those schools if any become available.

Waiting lists will be kept by all admission authorities until at least **31 December 2023**. The waiting list will be maintained strictly in accordance with the oversubscription criteria and if a place becomes available this will be offered to the child ranked highest on the list. Places on waiting lists will change over time as new applications are received. When any place in a school is refused, the LA will reallocate that place to the child at the top of the waiting list for that school.

Appeals

All parents have the right of appeal if refused a place at a school. Appeals are coordinated by the relevant admission authority. Appeals will be heard by an independent appeals panel and if the panel uphold the appeal, the decision is legally binding on the admission authority and they must admit the child. Very few appeals are upheld.

Admission of Children outside their Normal Age Group

1) A request may be made for a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Any such request should be discussed with the head teacher of the school and made in writing to the local authority. The relevant admission authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the local authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

2) The parents of a summer born child, i.e. a child born between 1 April and 31 August, may request that the child be admitted out of their normal age group, to the reception class in the September following their fifth birthday and that the child will remain in this cohort as they progress through school.

Parents who want to make this request should make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time. The application to the local authority should include this request. The local authority will liaise with the school and the relevant admission authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher, who has statutory responsibility

for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the relevant admission authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Parents will be informed of the outcome of the request before primary national offer day.

If the request is agreed, the application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If the request is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

Where a parent's request is agreed, they must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools.

3) If a child who has not reached compulsory school age has been allocated a Reception place and their parent or carer wishes to delay their child's entry to school, the place will be held open. The place must be taken up in the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which it was made.

Shared responsibility

The management of school applications may be severely delayed during the main admissions round where separated parents* of the child each submit an application for different schools or one parent does not agree with the application made by the other parent. The School Admissions Code states that only one offer of a school place per child can be made by the Local Authority. In this situation the Local Authority asks that parents and/or carers resolve matters between themselves before informing the Local Authority in writing of which application should be processed/their agreement to an application. In case of dispute between parents, where more than one parent has parental responsibility and they do not agree to an application being made to a particular school, a temporary school place will be offered until any dispute is resolved by both parents as a personal matter and this will be based on the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term-time only.

Children from overseas

Children who hold a full British Citizen passport or children whose passport has been endorsed to show they have the right of abode in the UK are entitled to apply for a place at a maintained school. The passport or visa may be requested for inspection before an offer of a place can be made. The LA will allocate a place in advance for families of UK service personnel and Crown Servants with a confirmed posting to the area, where they are moving to the area outside of the normal admission round.

Applying for places in-year (outside of the normal admissions round)

Parents with children of school age who move into Northumberland and require a school place in-year (outside of the normal admissions round) should contact the Admissions Team if they require advice on schools with places.

Parents who want a place in a Northumberland school will need to complete the LA's in-year school application form and return it to the LA Admissions Team. Parents are allowed to name their preferred schools on the form.

Places cannot be allocated on the basis of intended future changes of address unless house moves have been confirmed, for example through the exchange of contracts or the signing of a formal lease agreement. Documentary evidence to support the new address will be required.

In Northumberland, the local authority manage the in-year admissions for the majority of schools, however some academies allocate their own in-year admissions directly. Where this is the case, the LA will forward the application to the school and the school will inform the parent if they are able to offer a place. If no place is available at a preferred school, the LA will make Northumberland residents an offer of an alternative school.

Attendance at school following the offer of a school place

For admission to a school's normal point of entry, the child is expected to attend the allocated school within 10 school days of the start of the term (except where deferred entry to Reception has been agreed, in which case the child is expected to attend from the start of the term).

For in-year admissions, the child is expected to take up the offer and attend the allocated school within 10 school days of being made an offer, or the offer will be withdrawn.

Coordination timetable for admission to Reception in September 2023

DATE	EVENT
1 November 2022	Application process opens online for 2023/24
Midnight 15 January 2023	Closing date for all application forms to be received by the LA
14 February 2023	Last date for any late applications to be submitted and considered as Exceptions
5 February 2023	Applications for own admission authority schools and academies in Northumberland will be forwarded to those admission authorities and applications stating preferences for schools in other LAs will be forwarded to those LAs
2 March 2023	Academies, foundation and voluntary aided schools to provide the LA with their ranked lists of applicants, including details of how the oversubscription criteria were applied
8 March 2023	The LA will inform other LAs of any offers of Northumberland schools to be made to applicants resident in their areas
22 March 2023	The LA will inform Northumberland schools of children to be offered places at their schools
16 April 2023	National offer day for places.
1 May 2023	Date for parents to refuse the offer
8 May 2023	Reallocate spaces that have become available since offer day (on-time applicants only - waiting list process) in criteria order.
29 May 2023 onwards	Places are allocated as and when they become available in priority order.
June/July	Appeals are heard

Coordination timetable for admission to middle, secondary and high schools in September 2023

DATE	EVENT
12 September 2022	Application process opens online for 2023/24
Midnight 31 October 2022	Closing date for all applications to be received by the LA
22 November 2022	Last date for any late applications to be submitted and be considered as exceptions
23 November 2022	Applications for own admission authority schools and academies in Northumberland will be forwarded to those admission authorities and applications stating preferences for schools in other LAs will be forwarded to those LAs
11 January 2023	Academies, foundation and voluntary aided schools to provide the LA with their ranked lists of applicants, including details of how the oversubscription criteria were applied
25 January 2023	The LA will inform other LAs of any offers of Northumberland schools to be made to applicants resident in their areas.
28 February 2023	The LA will inform Northumberland schools of children to be offered places at their schools
1 March 2023	National Offers Day
16 March 2023	Date for parents to refuse offers of a place
20 March 2023	Reallocate spaces that have become available since offer day (on-time applicants only – first waiting list process).
18 April 2023 onwards	Places are allocated as and when they become available in priority order
May – July	Appeals are heard

All schools and academies to which this scheme applies:

1. All Northumberland County Council community and voluntary controlled schools

2. VA Middle Schools

N/A

3. Trusts

Ashington Learning Partnership Trust

Bothal Primary School

Central Primary School

4. Academies and Free Schools (first/primary)

Abbeyfields First School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Bede Academy (South site), Emmanuel Schools Foundation

Belsay Primary School, Pele Trust

Bishop's Primary School (NCEA)

Blyth Malvins Close Academy, Wise Academies

Blyth Morpeth Road Academy, Wise Academies

Blyth Croftway Academy, Wise Academies

Broomley First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Cramlington Village Primary School

Darras Hall Primary School, Pele Trust

Haltwhistle Primary Academy, Wise Academies

Harbottle Church of England First School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Heddon on the Wall St Andrew's C of E Primary School, Pele Trust

Meadowdale Academy (primary from September 2020)

Mickley First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Morpeth Stobhillgate First School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Ovingham CE First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Pax Christi Catholic Partnership, Ss Peter and Paul's Catholic Academy (Cramlington)

Ponteland Primary School, Pele Trust

Ponteland Community Primary School (previously Ponteland Middle), associate of Tyne Coast Academy Trust

Prudhoe Adderlane Academy, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Prudhoe Castle First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Prudhoe West Academy, Wise Academies

Richard Coates C of E Primary School, Pele Trust

Shaftoe Trust Primary School, Wise Academies

St Bede's Roman Catholic Primary School

St Mary's Roman Catholic First School

St Matthew's Roman Catholic Primary Academy, St Thomas More Partnership of Schools

St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic Primary School

Thropton Village First School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust,

Warkworth Church of England Primary School

Whitfield Church of England Primary School, The Good Shepherd Multi-Academy Trust

Whittonstall First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Wylam First School, Tyne Community Learning Trust

Academies (Middle)

Dr Thomlinson Church of England Middle School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Morpeth Chantry Middle School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Morpeth Newminster Middle School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

Hexham Middle School, Hadrian Learning Trust

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School Admissions Arrangements 2021/22, -

Highfield Middle School, Tyne Community Learning Trust
Ovingham Middle School, Tyne Community Learning Trust
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Middle School

Academies (secondary/high)

Ashington Academy, The North East Learning Trust
Bede Academy (North Site), Emmanuel Schools Foundation
Bedlington Academy, The North East Learning Trust
Berwick Academy
Cramlington Learning Village
NCEA Duke's Secondary School
Ponteland High School, Pele Trust
Prudhoe High School, Tyne Community Learning Trust
Queen Elizabeth High School, Hadrian Learning Trust
St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Pax Christi Catholic Partnership
The Blyth Academy, Northern Education Trust
The King Edward VI School, The 3 Rivers Learning Trust

5. VA and Foundation Schools

Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England Primary School
Bellingham Primary School
Bellingham Middle School and Sports College
Broomhaugh Church of England First School
Chollerton Church of England First School
Corbridge St Helen's Church of England First School
Holy Island Church of England First School
Holy Trinity Church of England First School
Hugh Joicey Church of England First School
Humshaugh Church of England First School
Longhorsley Church of England First School
Morpeth All Saints Church of England First School
St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic First School (Berwick)
St Robert's Roman Catholic First School
Tritlington Church of England First School
Wark Church of England First School
Whitley Chapel Church of England First School
Ellingham Church of England Primary School
Embleton Vincent Edwards' Church of England Primary School
Greenhead Church of England Primary School
Henshaw Church of England Primary School
Newbrough Church of England Primary School
Richard Coates Church of England School
St Aidan's Roman Catholic Primary School
St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic First School
St Michael's Church of England Primary School
St Paul's Roman Catholic Primary School (Alnwick)
Whalton Church of England Primary School

Northumberland County Council Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools - 2023/24

Admission to First and Primary Schools (Reception)

Introduction

These are part of the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled first and primary schools.

NB If you are applying for a school that manages their own admissions e.g academies, please review their admissions policy/arrangements via the school website.

Governing Bodies of all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, parents and wider community groups who may have an interest in school admission arrangements have been consulted on the County Council's Admission Policy.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

In line with current legislation, the Local Authority has drawn up a co-ordinated admissions scheme to coordinate admissions to maintained schools and Academies within Northumberland and neighbouring authorities for the main admissions round.

Published Admission Numbers

The admission number the Local Authority will publish for each community and voluntary controlled school is shown below.

School Name	Published Admission Number (PAN)
Acomb First School	15
Allendale Primary School	24
Amble First School	30
Amble Links First	30
Beaconhill Community Primary School	30
Beaufront First School	15
Bedlington Station Primary School	30
Bedlington Stead Lane Primary School	30
Bedlington West End First School	30
Belford Primary School	30
Berwick St. Mary's C.E. First School	30
Branton Community Primary School	6
Broomhill First School	15
Burnside Primary School	60
Cambo First School	8
Cambois Primary School	15
Choppington Primary School	15
Cragside C of E Primary School	60

Cramlington Eastlea Primary School	30
Ellington Primary School	30
Felton C of E Primary School	15
Grange View CE First School	30
Greenhaugh County Primary School (as will be)	8
Guidepost Ringway Primary School	30
Hareside Primary School	60
Hexham First School	30
Hipsburn Primary School	21
Holywell First School	30
Horton Grange Primary School	90
Kielder Community Primary School (as will be)	8
Linton Primary School	8
Longhoughton C of E Primary School	30
Lowick C of E VC First School	10
Morpeth First School	60
Mowbray Primary School	30
New Delaval County Primary School	45
New Hartley First School	30
Newsham Primary School	60
Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E First School	10
Northburn Primary School	45
Otterburn Primary School	10
Pegswood County Primary School	30 (previously 40)
Red Row Community First School	29
Rothbury First School	20
Scremerston First School	18
Seahouses Primary School	21
Seaton Delaval First School	30 (previously 45)
Seaton Sluice First School	30
Seghill First School	30
Shanklea Primary School	45
Shilbottle Primary School	30
Slaley First School	10
Spittal Community First School	40
Stakeford Primary School	30
Stamfordham Primary School	15
Stannington First School	20
Swansfield Park Primary School	45
Swarland Primary School	17
The Sele First School, Hexham	84
Tweedmouth Prior Park First School	30
Tweedmouth West First School	30
Whittingham Primary School	15
Wooler First School	27

The Local Authority Admissions Policy for 2023-2024

This admissions policy will be used to allocate places at those schools which are oversubscribed. It is attached below for entry to a Reception class.

Admission Policy – first and primary schools

This policy applies only to Local Authority maintained schools and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

The County Council is obliged to admit all applicants to a particular school provided these do not exceed the school's Published Admission Number (PAN).

Children with a Statement of Special Educational Need or an Education Health and Care Plan where the school is named in the statement will be admitted.

Oversubscription Criteria

Where there are more applications than places available the following oversubscription criteria will be applied, strictly in order of priority:

1. Children looked after and all who were previously looked after

Note: A 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school. This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders). Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by s.12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order. See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

2. Children adopted from care outside of England

Note: Minister of State for School Standards intends to amend the School Admissions Code but in the meantime, he asks that children adopted from care outside of England are given the second highest priority for admission in oversubscription criteria. Once the code has been updated, admission authorities will have the opportunity to consult upon and publish any formal changes

3. Children living within the catchment area of the school and those on whose behalf firm evidence is presented that they will be living in the catchment area by the appropriate admission date.
4. Children with an exceptional social or medical reason that means that they can only attend that specific school (for example, where the child or one or both parents has a disability that means that the child can only go to one school).

Strong supporting evidence must be provided from a professional body involved with the family or the child. The professional must be independent of both the family and the school. The evidence must relate specifically to the school for which the application is being made and must demonstrate clearly why it is the only school that can meet the child's needs. No assumptions should be made that the submission of the relevant evidence will, in itself be sufficient to allocate a place.

NOTE: You will not be allocated a place under this criterion if you omit to send to School Admissions Team a written statement from a professional third party by 16 January 2023.

5. Children resident in the greater catchment area of the school partnership who have a sibling* already in the school who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission. Evidence must be presented to confirm that the child will be living in the greater catchment area by the appropriate admission date.
6. Children resident in the greater catchment area of the school partnership. Evidence must be presented to confirm that the child will be living in the greater catchment area by the appropriate admission date.

NOTE: The greater catchment area for a school is the catchment area of the high or secondary school i.e all school in a partnership that feed into a particular high or secondary school.

7. Children who have a sibling* who already attends the school and who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission.

* For the purpose of admissions siblings are deemed to be brothers and sisters, stepsiblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children who reside permanently in the household and are treated as siblings.

8. Children on whose behalf preferences are expressed on grounds other than any of those outlined above.

GENERAL

Parents may be asked to provide evidence of residency if the requested school is oversubscribed.

Should it prove necessary, because places are limited, to distinguish between children in any given category priority will be given to those who live nearest to the school, measured in a direct line ('as the crow flies') from the front door of the home to the main gate of the school, using the LA's computerised measuring (GIS) system.

Applications on behalf of children who are resident in other Local Authority areas will be considered in the same way as applications from Northumberland residents.

Children with disabilities will be treated no less favourably than other applicants for admission. Schools are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with disabilities are not placed at a substantial disadvantage, and no child will be refused a place on the grounds of disability. A pupil has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The County Council reserves the right to vary these criteria within the relevant year to take account of revisions to legislation or its interpretation by the courts.

Those parents whose application to a school has been unsuccessful will be notified of their right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, gives this right to all parents whose application for a school has been unsuccessful. The decision of an Appeal Panel is binding on both the Admission Authority and the school. The School Admission Appeals Code can be found on the DfE website at: www.gov.uk/dfe.

Definitions used under the policy

'Parents' include all those people who have a parental responsibility* for a child as set out in the Children's Act 1989. Where responsibility for a child is 'shared', the person deemed to be the person responsible for completing the application is the person receiving Child Benefit and whose address will be used for admission purposes.

*Parental Responsibility, unless otherwise determined by a court order:

- Mothers automatically have parental responsibility.

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School Admissions Arrangements 2021/22, -

- Fathers also have parental responsibility if the father is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth. This continues after any divorce/separation/remarriage even if the child lives apart from them.
- An unmarried father can obtain Parental Responsibility by:
 - marrying the mother
 - having his name registered or re-registered on the birth certificate if his name is not already registered**
 - entering into a Parental Responsibility Agreement with the mother
 - obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order from the court
 - having obtained a Residence Order prior to 22.4.2014
 - by being named as the resident parent under a Child Arrangements Order
 - becoming the child's guardian on the mother's death

**The law has changed so that unmarried fathers who registered or re-registered their name on their child's birth certificate *after* 1st December 2003 will have Parental Responsibility for their child.

Therefore:

- If an unmarried father has a child after 1st December 2003 and he is registered on the birth certificate he WILL have Parental Responsibility.
- If a child's birth was registered before 1st December 2003 and the father was not named on the birth certificate, the birth can be re-registered to include the father's name. Once this has been done, the father WILL have Parental Responsibility.*
- If an unmarried father's name is already on the birth certificate and the child was registered before 1st December 2003, the law has not changed this situation so the father WILL NOT have Parental Responsibility. (Unless obtained by other means).

Same-sex parents

Civil partners

Same-sex partners will both have parental responsibility if they were civil partners at the time of the treatment, eg donor insemination or fertility treatment.

Non-civil partners

For same-sex partners who are not civil partners, the 2nd parent can get parental responsibility by either:

- [applying for parental responsibility](#) if a parental agreement was made
- becoming a civil partner of the other parent and making a parental responsibility agreement or jointly registering the birth

Details of catchment areas are available on request or by following the links on the County Council's webpage to the interactive mapping system.

Address to be Used in Determining Priority for Admission

If a school is oversubscribed, the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term-time only, will be used in the allocation process.

Fraudulent Applications and Withdrawal of a School Place

The Local Authority will not withdraw the offer of a place unless it has been established that the offer was obtained through a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application. Where an offer is withdrawn on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information, the application will be considered on the basis of correct information, and parents or carers will have the right of appeal where no place can be offered.

The local authority may seek to withdraw the offer of a school places if it is established that a fraudulent application was submitted.

Where parents or carers are found to have made a fraudulent application for a school place and the admission authority decides not to withdraw that place in the best interests of the child, should a school place be sought for any other sibling, or siblings, the sibling criterion will not be considered.

If a place is withdrawn it will be offered to those with a greater right to the place as of National Offers Day, ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.

Parental disagreement

The management of school applications may be severely delayed during the main admissions round where separated parents* of the child each submit an application for different schools or one parent does not agree with the application made by the other parent. The School Admissions Code states that only one offer of a school place per child can be made by the Local Authority. In this situation the Local Authority asks that parents and/or carers resolve matters between themselves before informing the Local Authority in writing of which application should be processed/their agreement to an application. In case of dispute between parents, where more than one parent has parental responsibility and they do not agree to an application being made to a particular school, a temporary school place will be offered until any dispute is resolved by both parents as a personal matter and this will be based on the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term-time only.

Late Applications

For oversubscribed schools, applications which are received or changed after the published closing date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Normally applications submitted after the relevant published date will not be considered until after allocations for those parents who applied on time have been made. Any evidence submitted after the relevant date to support a late application or change of preference will not be considered. Affected applicants will not receive an offer with other parents on National Offers Day, instead receiving one on 're-allocation day'.

Waiting Lists

Once places have been allocated, children refused a place will continue to be considered for any vacancies which become available. Vacancies will always be allocated by applying the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria of the school; length of time on the waiting list will not be considered. Each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. The LA will hold all waiting lists for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and where requested for VA, Trust and Academies. Waiting lists for the normal year of entry will be kept open until 31 December 2023.

Twins and Siblings of Multiple Births

Where places are available for some but not all children from multiple births (including twins) the Local Authority will exercise discretion offered by the School Admissions Code to offer all the children a place, even if this breaches the published admission number for the year group.

Catchment Areas

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Catchment areas are a tool used to apply the over subscription criteria when a school has more applications than places. Catchment areas have no separate legal identity outside of the application of the admissions policy and determining entitlement to home to school transport. Details of catchment areas are available on request or by following the links on the County Council's webpage to the interactive mapping system.

Distance Measures

Distance measures will be undertaken using the Local Authority's computerised Geographical Information System (GIS). This measures a straight-line measure from the front door of the home to the main gate of the school. Distance checking is an integral function within the school admissions software ensuring consistency in measurement. Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Admission of Children below Compulsory School Age and Deferred Entry

A child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday. A request may be made for the date at which a child, below compulsory school age, is admitted to the school, to be deferred to later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age, or beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year. A child may take up a part-time place until the child reaches compulsory school age. Upon receipt of the offer of a place a parent should notify the school as soon as possible, that they wish to either defer their child's entry into the school or take up a part-time place.

Any such request should be discussed with the head teacher and made in writing to the local authority. The local authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the local authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Admission of Children outside their Normal Age Group

A request may be made for a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Any such request should be discussed with the head teacher of the school and made in writing to the local authority. The local authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the local authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Summer Born Children

The parents of a summer born child, i.e. a child born between 1 April and 31 August, may request that the child be admitted out of their normal age group, to the reception class in the September following their fifth birthday and that the child will remain in this cohort as they progress through school.

Parents who want to make this request should make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time. The application to the local authority should include this request. The local authority will liaise with the school and the relevant admission authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher, who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the relevant admission

authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

Parents will be informed of the outcome of the request before primary national offer day.

If the request is agreed, the application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If the request is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

Where a parent's request is agreed, they must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools. If a child who has not reached compulsory school age has been allocated a Reception place and their parent or carer wishes to delay their child's entry to school, the place will be held open. The place must be taken up in the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age.

Admission to Nursery Schools and Infant/Primary Schools Offering Nursery Education

These arrangements do not apply to the admission of nursery children. Nursery admission arrangements are determined separately. **Attendance at a school's nursery does not guarantee admission to the school's Reception group nor is it a factor in allocating places in most cases.**

All parents must apply for a place in a Reception class.

The Admissions Timetable

The timetable for the September 2023 application and allocation processes will be in line with the co-ordinated admissions schemes in accordance with the timetable detailed below.

Admissions timetable

1 November 2022:	E-admissions portal opens.
1 November 2022:	Common application forms together with admissions information and school prospectuses are made available for parents.
15 January 2023:	Closing date for applications: E-admission portal closes.
16 April 2023:	Parents notified of the outcome of their applications for school places
2 May 2023:	Last date for refusals by parents

Publication of the Local Authority's Information for Parents (2023/24) Handbook

The Information for Parents publication for September 2023 entry will be available from the beginning of September 2022.

APPENDIX 3

Northumberland County Council Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools - 2023/24

Admission to Middle, High, Secondary schools (years 5, 7 and 9) and sixth forms (year 12 entry)

Introduction

These are part of the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled middle, high, secondary schools and sixth forms.

Governing Bodies of all Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, parents and wider community groups who may have an interest in school admission arrangements have been consulted on the County Council's Admission Policy.

Co-ordinated Admission Arrangements

In line with current legislation, the Local Authority has drawn up a separate co-ordinated admissions scheme to coordinate admissions to maintained schools and Academies within Northumberland and neighbouring authorities for the main admissions round.

Published Admission Numbers

The admission number the Local Authority will publish for each community and voluntary controlled school is shown below

School Name	Published Admission Number (PAN) (main school)	Published Admission Number (admission to sixth form – external (new) students only)
Astley Community High School	150	10
Berwick Middle School	114	N/A
Corbridge Middle School	90	N/A
Glendale Middle School	42	N/A
Haydon Bridge High School (for entry into year 7)	120	10
James Calvert Spence College	120	10
Seaton Sluice Middle School	85	N/A
The Duchess's Community High School	250	10
Tweedmouth Community Middle School	93	N/A
Whytrig Middle School	90	N/A

The Local Authority Admissions Policy for 2023-2024

This admissions policy will be used to allocate places at those Local Authority schools which are oversubscribed. It is attached below for entry to Year 5, Year 7, Year 9 and Year 12.

Admission Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools – middle, high, secondary schools and sixth forms

This policy applies only to Local Authority maintained schools and voluntary controlled schools.

NB If you are applying for a school that manages their own admissions e.g academies, please review their admissions policy/arrangements via the school website.

The County Council is obliged to admit all applicants to a particular school provided these do not exceed the school's Published Admission Number (PAN).

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan where the school is named in the statement will be admitted.

Oversubscription Criteria – Years 5, 7 and 9

Where there are more applications than places available the following oversubscription criteria will be applied, strictly in order of priority:

1 Children looked after and all who were previously looked after

Note: A 'looked after child' is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) at the time of making an application to a school. This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders). Child arrangements orders are defined in s.8 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by s.12 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Child arrangements orders replace residence orders and any residence order in force prior to 22 April 2014 is deemed to be a child arrangements order. See Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 which defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

2 Children adopted from care outside England

Note: Minister of State for School Standards intends to amend the School Admissions Code but in the meantime, he asks that children adopted from care outside of England are given the second highest priority for admission in oversubscription criteria. Once the code has been updated, admission authorities will have the opportunity to consult upon and publish any formal changes

3 Children living within the catchment area of the school and those on whose behalf firm evidence is presented that they will be living in the catchment area by the appropriate admission date.

4 Children with an exceptional social or medical reason that means that they can only attend that specific school (for example, where the child or one or both parents has a disability that means that the child can only go to one school).

Strong supporting evidence must be provided from a professional body involved with the family or the child. The professional must be independent of both the family and the school.

The evidence must relate specifically to the school for which the application is being made and must demonstrate clearly why it is the only school that can meet the child's needs. No assumptions should be made that the submission of the relevant evidence will, in itself be sufficient to allocate a place.

Note: You will not be allocated a place under this criterion if you omit to send to the School Admissions Team a written statement from a professional third party by 31 October 2022.

- 5 Children resident in the greater catchment area of the school partnership who have a sibling* already in the school who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission. Evidence must be presented to confirm that the child will be living in the greater catchment area by the appropriate admission date.
- 6 Children resident in the greater catchment area of the school partnership. Evidence must be presented to confirm that the child will be living in the greater catchment area by the appropriate admission date.

NOTE: The greater catchment area for a school is the catchment area of the high or secondary school i.e all school in a partnership that feed into a particular high or secondary school.

- 7 Children who have a sibling* who already attends the school, including sixth form, and who is expected to be on roll at the school at the time of admission.

*For the purpose of admissions siblings are deemed to be brothers and sisters, stepsiblings, foster siblings, adopted siblings and other children who reside permanently in the household and are treated as siblings.

- 8 Requests on behalf of children which are based on the need to maintain continuity of educational provision within the feeder pattern of Northumberland's schools.

Important: This criterion does not apply to those children who have entered a school in the final year before transfer.

- 9 Children on whose behalf preferences are expressed on grounds other than any of those outlined above.

Applications for Year 12

All Northumberland schools offer sixth form of study for students. The majority of the sixth form students transfer from Year 11, but places are available for external students. The entry requirements for sixth forms are largely dependent on the course of study that a student wishes to access. They are the same for internal and external students. Details of specific entry requirements and courses available may be obtained from the school. The availability of courses is dependent upon the number of applicants and the financial sustainability of the course and the Governing Body of the school determines this.

Entry requirements and oversubscription criteria – Year 12

Priority will be given to, in order:

1. Students who have attended the school in the previous academic year (during Year 11) and who satisfy the school's entry requirements* for the course available **and then**,
2. All other students of the relevant age who satisfy the school's entry requirements* for the course available.

Where the school is oversubscribed within category (1) or (2) the following will be applied, strictly in order of priority:

a) Children who are 'looked after' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, residence/child arrangement, or special guardianship order. A looked after child is a child who is, at the time of making an application to a school, (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

b) All other students.

c) Distance from home to school measured in a direct line, with those living nearest the school receiving priority. Otherwise if only one final place can be offered and two applicants live equidistant from the school, the LA's system of random selection will apply, independently administered.

Applicants refused admission to a sixth form are entitled to an appeal to an independent appeals panel.

*Details of the entry requirements are available from the individual Sixth Forms.

GENERAL

Parents may be asked to provide evidence of residency if the requested school is oversubscribed.

Should it prove necessary, because places are limited, to distinguish between children in any given category priority will be given to those who live nearest to the school, measured in a direct line ('as the crow flies') using the LA's computerised measuring system (GIS). Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Applications on behalf of children who are resident in other Local Authority areas will be considered in the same way as applications from Northumberland residents.

Children with disabilities will be treated no less favourably than other applicants for admission. Schools are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with disabilities are not placed at a substantial disadvantage, and no child will be refused a place on the grounds of disability. A pupil has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The County Council reserves the right to vary these criteria within the relevant year to take account of revisions to legislation or its interpretation by the courts.

Those parents whose application to a school has been unsuccessful will be notified of their right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, gives this right to all parents whose application for a school has been unsuccessful. The decision of an Appeal Panel is binding on both the Admission Authority and the school. The School Admission Appeals Code can be found on the DfE website at: www.gov.uk/dfes.

Definitions used under the policy

'Parents' include all those people who have a parental responsibility* for a child as set out in the Children's Act 1989. Where responsibility for a child is 'shared', the person deemed to be the person responsible for completing the application is the person receiving Child Benefit and whose address will be used for admission purposes.

*Parental Responsibility, unless otherwise determined by a court order:

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- Mothers automatically have parental responsibility.
- Fathers also have parental responsibility if the father is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth. This continues after any divorce/separation/remarriage even if the child lives apart from them.
- An unmarried father can obtain Parental Responsibility by:
 - marrying the mother
 - having his name registered or re-registered on the birth certificate if his name is not already registered**
 - entering into a Parental Responsibility Agreement with the mother
 - obtaining a Parental Responsibility Order from the court
 - having obtained a Residence Order prior to 22.4.2014
 - by being named as the resident parent under a Child Arrangements Order
 - becoming the child's guardian on the mother's death

**The law has changed so that unmarried fathers who registered or re-registered their name on their child's birth certificate *after* 1st December 2003 will have Parental Responsibility for their child.

Therefore:

- If an unmarried father has a child after 1st December 2003 and he is registered on the birth certificate he WILL have Parental Responsibility.
- If a child's birth was registered before 1st December 2003 and the father was not named on the birth certificate, the birth can be re-registered to include the father's name. Once this has been done, the father WILL have Parental Responsibility.*
- If an unmarried father's name is already on the birth certificate and the child was registered before 1st December 2003, the law has not changed this situation so the father WILL NOT have Parental Responsibility. (Unless obtained by other means).

Same-sex parents

Civil partners

Same-sex partners will both have parental responsibility if they were civil partners at the time of the treatment, eg donor insemination or fertility treatment.

Non-civil partners

For same-sex partners who are not civil partners, the 2nd parent can get parental responsibility by either:

- [applying for parental responsibility](#) if a parental agreement was made
- becoming a civil partner of the other parent and making a parental responsibility agreement or jointly registering the birth

Details of catchment areas are available on request or by following the links on the County Council's webpage to the interactive mapping system

Address to be Used in Determining Priority for Admission

If a school is oversubscribed, the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term time only, will be used in the allocation process.

Fraudulent Applications and Withdrawal of a School Place

The local authority will not withdraw the offer of a place unless it has been established that the offer was obtained through a fraudulent, or intentionally misleading application. Where an offer is withdrawn on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information, the application will be considered on the basis of correct information, and parents or carers will have the right of appeal where no place can be offered.

The local authority may seek to withdraw the offer of a school places if it is established that a fraudulent application was submitted.

Where parents or carers are found to have made a fraudulent application for a school place and the admission authority decides not to withdraw that place in the best interests of the child, should a school place be sought for any other sibling, or siblings, the sibling criterion will not be considered.

If a place is withdrawn it will be offered to those with a greater right to the place as of National Offers Day, ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.

Parental disagreement

The management of school applications may be severely delayed during the main admissions round where separated parents* of the child each submit a separate application for different schools or one parent does not agree with the application made by the other parent. The School Admissions Code states that only one offer of a school place per child is made by the Local Authority. In this situation the Local Authority asks that parents and/or carers resolve matters between themselves before informing the Local Authority in writing of which application should be processed/their agreement to an application. In case of dispute between parents, where more than one parent has parental responsibility and they do not agree to an application being made to a particular school, a temporary school place will be offered until any dispute is resolved by both parents as a personal matter and this will be based on the address of the parent or carer with whom the child is normally resident, Mondays to Fridays term time only.

Late Applications

For oversubscribed schools, applications which are received or changed after the published closing date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Normally application submitted after the relevant published date will not be considered until after allocations for those parents who applied on time have been made. Any evidence submitted after the relevant date to support a late application or change of preference will not be considered. Affected applicants will not receive an offer with other parents on National Offers Day, instead receiving one on 're-allocation day'.

Waiting Lists

Once places have been allocated, children refused a place will continue to be considered for any vacancies which become available. Vacancies will always be allocated by applying the admissions policy and oversubscription criteria of the school; length of time on the waiting list will not be considered. Each added child will require the list to be ranked again in line with the published oversubscription criteria. The LA will hold all waiting lists for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools and where requested for VA, Trust and Academies. Waiting lists for the normal year of entry will be kept open until 31 December 2023.

Twins and Siblings of Multiple Births

Where places are available for some but not all children from multiple births (including twins) the Local Authority will exercise discretion offered by the School Admissions Code to offer all the children a place, even if this breaches the published admission number for the year group.

Catchment Areas

Catchment areas are a tool used to apply the over subscription criteria when a school has more applications than places. Catchment areas have no separate legal identity outside of the application of the admissions policy and determining entitlement to home to school transport. Details of catchment areas are available on request or by following the links on the County Council's webpage to the interactive mapping system.

Distance Measures

Distance measures will be undertaken using the Local Authority's computerised Geographical Information System (GIS). This measures a straight-line measure from the front door of the home to the main gate of the school. Distance checking is an integral function within the school admissions software ensuring consistency in measurement. Where two or more distances are found to be equal a system of random allocation will apply, independently administered.

Admission of Children outside their Normal Age Group

A request may be made for a child to be admitted outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health.

Any such request should be made in writing to the head teacher of the school and to the local authority. The local authority will make its decision about the request based on the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child. In addition to taking into account the views of the head teacher who has statutory responsibility for the internal organisation, management and control of the school, the local authority will take into account the views of the parents and of appropriate medical and education professionals.

The Admissions Timetable

The timetable for the September 2023 application and allocation processes will be in line with the co-ordinated admissions schemes in accordance with the timetable detailed below

Admissions timetable (not sixth forms)

12 September 2022:	E-admissions portal opens.
12 September 2022:	Common application forms together with admissions information and school prospectuses are made available for parents.
31 October 2022:	Closing Date for Applications: E-admission portal closes.
1 March 2023:	Parents notified of the outcome of their applications for school places
15 March 2023:	Last date for refusals by parents.

Publication of the Local Authorities Information for Parents (2023/24) Handbook

The Information for Parents publication for September 2023 entry will be available from the beginning of September 2022

APPENDIX 4



Northumberland County Council

Equality Impact Assessment Template

To be completed for all key changes, decisions and proposals. Cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible. Further guidance is available at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Equality.aspx?nccredirect=1>

Duties which need to be considered:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal

1. Title of the change, decision or proposal:

The Council has consulted on proposals for Admission Arrangements for 2023/24

2. Date of equality impact assessment:

January 2020

3. Brief description of the change, decision or proposal:

- 1) The majority of the arrangements remain unchanged from the 2022/23 arrangements.
- 2) In addition, admission arrangements for sixth forms, including the criteria for entry, the admission number (relating to external students to Year 12 only) and the over subscription criteria (that will be applied if there are more applicants than places available) for 2023/24 are proposed. This is so that the Council is compliant with the School Admissions Code, which states that admission arrangements should include those for sixth forms

4. Name(s) and role(s) of officer(s) completing the assessment:

Jill Atkinson, School Admissions and Inclusion Manager
Audrey Kingham, Interim Director of Education and Skills

5. Overall, what are the outcomes of the change, decision or proposal expected to be? (E.g. will it reduce/terminate a low-priority service, maintain service outcomes at reduced cost, or change the balance of funding responsibility for a service which will remain the same?)

Annual determination of the admission arrangements by Cabinet is in accordance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021.

6. If you judge that this proposal is **not** relevant to some protected characteristics, tick these below (and explain underneath how you have reached this judgement).

Disability Sex Age Race Religion Sexual orientation

People who have changed gender Women who are pregnant or have babies

Employees who are married/in civil partnerships

After considering employees and service users, the characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

There is no evidence or reason to believe that the proposals would affect more positively or negatively people with the above protected characteristics than those without the above protected characteristics.

PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics

Answer these questions both in relation to people who use services and employees

Disability

Note: “disabled people” includes people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities, people with a long-term illness, and people with mental health problems. You should consider potential impacts on all of these groups.

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

7. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by disabled people, about disabled people’s experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for disabled people.

8. Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

9. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of disabled people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

10. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards disabled people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

11. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that disabled people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on disabled people.

12. If there are risks that disabled people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on disabled people.

13. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for disabled people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 7, above.

Sex

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

14. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by males and females, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for males or females.

15. Could males or females be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

16. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of males or females to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

17. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards males or females? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

18. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that males or females will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on males or females.

19. If there are risks that males or females could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on males or females.

20. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for males or females linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 14, above

Age

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

21. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different age groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for people of different age groups.

22. Could people of different age groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

23. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different age groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

24. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different age groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

25. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different age groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on different age groups

26. If there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on different age groups

27. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different age groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 21, above

Race

Note: For the purposes of the Act 'race' includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

28. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people of different racial groups, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for people of different racial groups.

29. Could people of different racial groups be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

30. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people of different racial groups to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

31. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of different racial groups? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

32. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of different racial groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on different racial groups

33. If there are risks that people of different racial groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on different racial groups

34. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people of different racial groups linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 28, above

Religion or belief

Note: *In the Equality Act, religion includes any religion. It also includes a lack of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or a lack of such belief.*

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

35. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different religions or beliefs, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for people with different religions or beliefs.

36. Could people with different religions or beliefs be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

37. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different religions or beliefs to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

38. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different religions or beliefs? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

39. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different religions or beliefs will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on people with different religions or beliefs

40. If there are risks that people with different religions or beliefs could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on people with different religions or beliefs

41. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different religions or beliefs linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 35, above

Sexual Orientation

Note: The Act protects bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian people.

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

42. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by people with different sexual orientations, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for people with different sexual orientations.

43. Could people with different sexual orientations be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

44. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

45. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people with different sexual orientations? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

46. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people with different sexual orientations will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on people with different sexual orientations

47. If there are risks that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on people with different sexual orientations

48. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for people with different sexual orientations linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 42, above

Gender Reassignment

Note: The Act provides protection for transgender people. A transgender person is someone who proposes to, starts or has completed a process to change his or her gender.

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

49. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by transgender people, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on any current arrangements for transgender people

50. Could transgender people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

51. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of transgender people to participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

52. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards transgender people? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

53. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that transgender people will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on transgender people

54. If there are risks that transgender people could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on transgender people

55. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for transgender people linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 49, above

Pregnancy and Maternity

Note: the law covers pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last 26 weeks, and those who are breast feeding.

Please answer these questions with reference to our employees and people who use our services

56. What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal by pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks

57. Could pregnant women and those with children under 26 weeks be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

58. Could the change, decision or proposal affect the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life? (e.g. by affecting their ability to go to meetings, take up public appointments etc.)

No

59. Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks? (e.g. by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

No

60. Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that pregnancy women or those with children under 26 weeks will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks

61. If there are risks that pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on pregnant women and those who have children under 26 weeks

62. Are there opportunities to create *positive* impacts for pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks linked to this change, decision or proposal?

See 56, above

Marriage and Civil Partnership

*Note: This applies to changes, decisions or proposals impacting on **employees only**. The Act protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership.*

63. What do you know about the Marriage and Civil Partnership profile of staff employed in the services affected by this change, decision or proposal, and about their experiences of working within it?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on employees who are married or in a civil partnership

64. Could employees who are married or in a civil partnership be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

No

65. If there are risks that employees who are married or in a civil partnership could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

The introduction of the proposals would have no impact on employees who are married or in a civil partnership

Human Rights

66. Could the change, decision or proposal impact on human rights? (e.g. the right to respect for private and family life, the right to a fair hearing and the right to education)

The proposals support the right to education

PART 3 - Course of Action

67. Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, tick one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal will be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis has identified risks to equality which will not be eliminated, and/or opportunities to promote better equality which will not be taken. Acceptance of these is reasonable and proportionate, given the objectives of the change, decision or proposal, and its overall financial and policy context.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The equality analysis shows that the change, decision or proposal would lead to actual or potential unlawful discrimination, or would conflict with the Council's positive duties to an extent which is disproportionate to its objectives. It should not be adopted in its current form.

68. Explain how you have reached the judgement ticked above, and summarise any steps which will be taken to reduce negative or enhance positive impacts on equality.

There is no evidence to suggest that any person with any of the protected characteristics would be disproportionately disadvantaged or advantaged by the proposals. Should a decision be made by the Council's Cabinet to implement the proposals, any evidence arising from the implementation that suggests that there could be possible negative impacts, those risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those with a protected characteristic. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring

69. What are your plans to monitor the actual impact of the implementation of the change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity? (include action points and timescales)

This EIA has been drafted in the light of the consultation carried out on the proposed Admission Arrangements for 2023/24. Should the proposals be approved and implemented, the EIA would be monitored during that period. If adverse implications were identified in the light of the implementation, ameliorating actions would be identified.

PART 5 - Authorisation

70. Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

Once completed, please send to: Keith.Thompson@northumbria.nhs.uk

CABINET 11 February

School Admissions Arrangements 2021/22, -



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3RD FEBRUARY 2022

Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021

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

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of report

This report is to publish to members the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report for 2020-21.

Recommendations

1. Members note the education achievements of our looked after children.
2. Members note the ongoing challenges caused by the disruption to education during the pandemic.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the corporate objectives, and specifically the "Learning" and "Thriving" priorities of the Corporate Plan 2018 - 2021.

Key Issues

1. The Virtual School's priority from September 2020 was to recover from the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic by getting pupils back on track with their education. Despite the further disruption caused by partial school closure from January 2021 and a full term of remote learning, there were good education outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers. Achievement at GCSE improved again and a much higher proportion of pupils are progressing into further education to follow level 3 courses.
2. We know that pupils are able to achieve their best when they are in stable school placements. For the 13th consecutive year there has been no permanent exclusion of a looked after child from school. However, the emotional impact of the pandemic and the restrictions to 'normal' school life have affected stability and it remains a priority to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and mid-year school moves.
3. The Education Support for Looked After Children (ESLAC) team was re-structured to introduce a Deputy Virtual School Headteacher who also fulfils the role of the Virtual School's SENDCO. Lead roles were created and additional capacity added so that we

could provide the support and interventions that our children need the most, for example educational psychology and careers' guidance.

4. The Virtual School made good progress with plans for improvement, despite the continued disruption caused by the global pandemic.

Background

1. Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2021 – see separate document.

Implications

Policy	The Virtual School fulfils the council's statutory duties in relation to the education of looked after children, previously looked after children and care leavers.
Finance and value for money	The current proposals seek to be delivered within existing service budgets. The impact of Covid 19 on expenditure is being monitored.
Legal	Discharge of local statutory duties regarding the education of looked after children, the Children Act 2004.
Procurement	None
Human Resources	The wellbeing of all staff is a priority as they cope with the additional pressures of Covid 19. Re-structuring of the ESLAC team created additional capacity in specialist areas eg educational psychology, careers' guidance.
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	None
Customer Consideration	Personal risk assessments are in place for all staff; all education providers have risk assessments in place which are monitored by NCC
Carbon reduction	None
Health and Wellbeing	The emotional and mental health and wellbeing of looked after children is a priority
Wards	No implications have been identified at this stage

Background Papers

[Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children, DfE statutory guidance February 2018](#)

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
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

Report Author: Jane Walker, Virtual School Headteacher

Phone: (01670) 622734

Email: jane.walker@northumberland.gov.uk

ANNUAL REPORT

of the
Virtual
School
Headteacher



We want the very best for our care-experienced children and young people. We want our children to tell us we are doing a good job and that they are doing their very best at school. We want them all to have clear academic or vocational pathways when they leave school so that their lives continue to improve and they feel a sense of belonging in their communities. We want schools and support services to see themselves as corporate parents and do a good job for their children in care.

JANE WALKER

Virtual School Headteacher

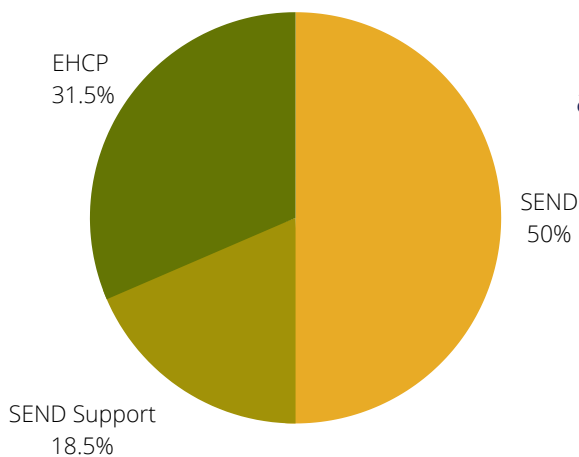
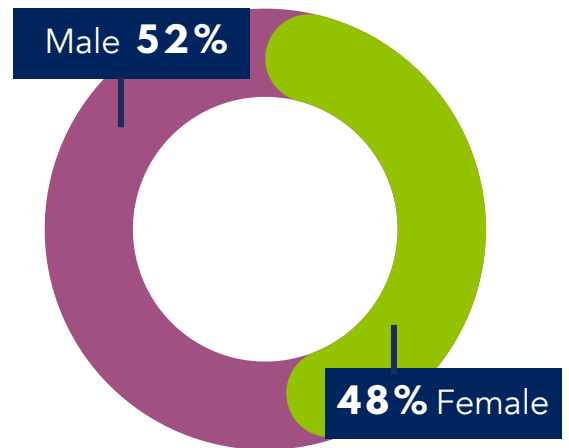
PROFILE OF PUPILS AGED 5 - 16



Looked after children



Previously Looked after children



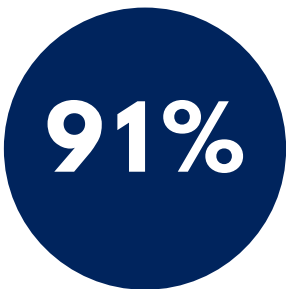
Pupils attend schools in other local authority areas





1 PARENT
2 Pregnancies

Largest age group
14-16 years
Secondary
Aged Pupils



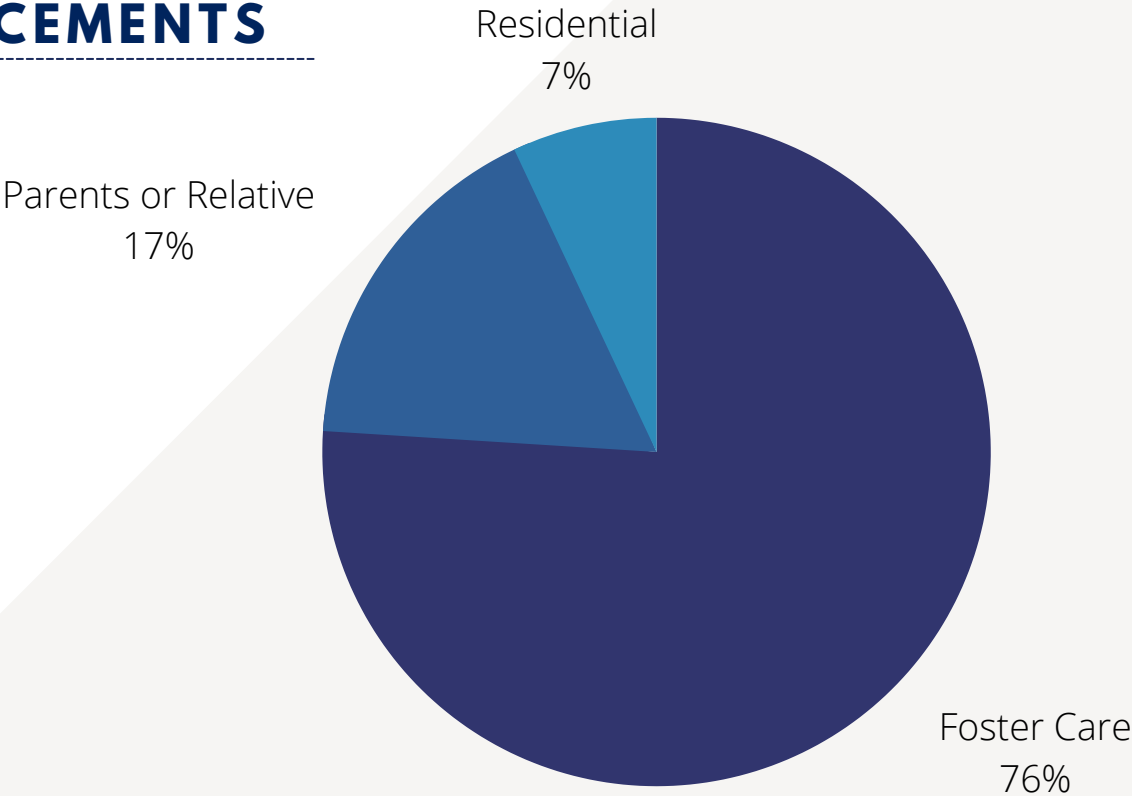
White British
0 unaccompanied
asylum seekers



62
children
new to care

100
left care

PLACEMENTS



2021 HEADLINES

GOOD



No permanent exclusions

13th consecutive year



80%

Looked after children progressing into further education

92%

PEPs quality assured as green or amber

98%

PEP Completion

IMPROVING

33%

Achievement at Key Stage 4 - the basics!

51%

Looked After reviews aligned with EHCP reviews



Children missing education

75%

Pupils attending good and outstanding schools

33%

Year 11 Progressing to level 3 qualifications

NOT YET GOOD ENOUGH

91.1%

Overall attendance

21.6%

Persistent absence

94

mid-school moves for

81

pupils

Fixed term exclusions

35

Pupils

22

different schools

66

sessions lost

WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

COVID

On January 1, 2021 schools were closed to pupils again and a system of remote learning was put in place. Our two priorities were then to keep our children safe and to keep our children learning.

These are the interventions from the ESLAC team that worked:

- supported schools to maintain stability for the majority of looked after pupils
- from our Educational Psychologists
 - school training
 - drop ins
 - bereavement and loss support
- EMDR resourcing (eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing)
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy approaches
- ensured high quality education by ensuring that all pupils had an up to date laptop (provided by the Virtual School since 2017) and monitoring access to online learning provided by schools
- provided tuition, both online and face to face, and in class 1 to 1 support
- gave all children a 'back on track pack' when schools re-opened
- prioritised transition planning and support through ePEPs and with Designated Teachers for those children with a planned school move in September
- funded and monitored the use of Lexia licences increased pupil usage by 60%
- prioritised planning for Year 11 progressing to education, training or employment Post 16
- careers advice drop-ins
- broadened multi-agency working to identify and meet needs as early as possible.

We re-structured the staffing in the ESLAC team to introduce a Deputy Virtual School Headteacher, who also fulfils the role of the Virtual School's SENDCO. Lead roles of Teacher, Educational Psychologist and Careers' Adviser were created to develop specific areas and responsibilities within the team, and Educational Psychology and careers' adviser capacity were increased.

With the right risk assessments in place, continued face to face working with children in schools, or at home if appropriate

143

Schools

Delivered 1:1 behaviour support intervention and emotional and mental health and wellbeing support

98

Pupils

Delivered Drawing and Talking therapeutic intervention

33

Pupils

WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

SEND

Improving the experience of looked after children with SEND was a priority.

- The post of SEN Lead Officer for Looked after children was created (based in the SEND Monitoring and Assessment Team, funded by the Virtual School), who works closely with the Deputy Virtual School Headteacher (fulfilling the role of Virtual School SENDCO).
- The Deputy Virtual School Headteacher now attends the SEND Panel and Early Years Inclusion Panel.
- PEP and EHCP reviews still took place during lockdown so that Designated Teachers in 'new' schools could understand and prepare to meet our children's needs as soon as they arrived in September 2021.
- An improvement in PEP outcomes aligned with EHCP outcomes was achieved through the PEP quality assurance process.
- Educational Psychologists worked with Designated Teachers to develop child centred approaches to assessment, planning and review processes.
- There was an increase in the number of children entering care with unidentified and therefore unmet special educational needs. We supported schools to refer 13 pupils for statutory assessment when they entered care.
- Good progress was made to deliver on the action plan from the 2020 multi-agency themed audit – what it's like to be a looked after child with SEND in Northumberland – addressing 4 main themes:
 1. Looked after children with SEND are recognised as a priority group
 2. Timeliness of decision making
 3. Voice of the child
 4. Information sharing
- Work started to improve education, training and employment opportunities for Care Leavers with SEND - part of the Care Leavers' Covenant that has leadership from the Virtual School.

8

Basics

Outcomes at GCSE were good, with 8 of the 15 children achieving the Basics having SEND including

3

with EHCPlans.

1

pupil with an EHCPlan achieved the Basics at grade 5+.

An improvement to 51% of Looked After reviews were aligned with EHCP reviews.










51%

Reviews

WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

PUPIL PREMIUM PLUS

In 2020-21 our total Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) budget was £755 090. In line with our PP+ policy we retained £850 from each grant of £2345 and used that centrally held funding of £273 700 to provide:

-  Staffing - Educational Psychologists for looked after and previously looked after children, Virtual School teachers, Careers' advisers, SEND Lead Officer for Looked after children, data support
-  Crisis funding for pupils with high level and complex needs in unstable school placements
-  Additional support, including 1 to 1 tuition for Year 11 pupils
-  Thrive approach attachment training (childhood and adolescent) for Designated Teachers and foster carers; Thrive licences for trained practitioners
-  Development of globalbridge careers' portal for looked after children and care leavers
-  Laptops for looked after children
-  ePEP development
-  Education resources eg licences for Britannica and Lexia
-  Rewards for pupils- including Expert Learner, progress and attendance.

Schools were allocated a maximum of £1450 of the DfE allocation of £2345 for each eligible pupil and dependent on the quality of the pupil's PEP. Schools received a total of £417,023 during the financial year. The funding was used by schools to support the outcomes for pupils recorded in their individual PEPs. The disruption in education means that it is not possible this year to meaningfully evaluate the impact of PP+ received by schools on the academic achievement of pupils. However, individual stories of success and the difference that PP+ made is captured in the good quality PEPs.

Early years settings in Northumberland received pupil premium for 72 pre-school children (ages 3 and 4) and used the funding to accelerate their development in preparation for school. Plans are underway to assess the impact of this pupil premium on the school readiness of

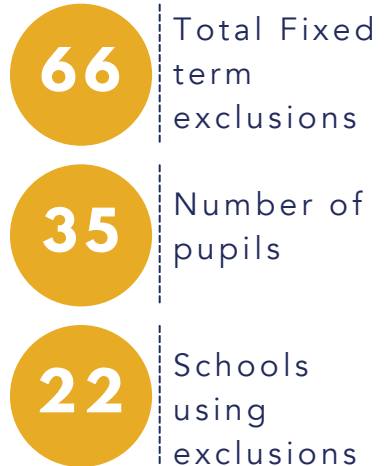
WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

STABILITY

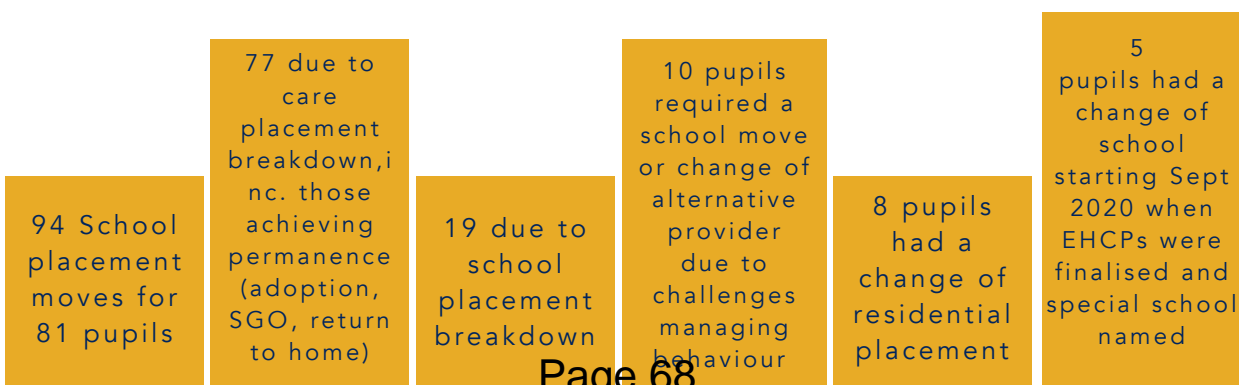
As might be expected during a global pandemic, stability in education for looked after children was adversely affected. There were record numbers of mid-year school moves, fixed term exclusions, persistent absentees and numbers of school age children moving in and out of care. Inevitably this had an impact on pupil wellbeing.

This is what we did to maintain stability:

- We worked closely with Family Placement and children's social care to reduce the number of placement moves and were closely involved in permanence planning. This meant that we could also influence planned moves out of county. Overall stability for looked after children was monitored closely at a strategic level.
- Where school moves were taking place we liaised with both schools and care teams to ensure that joint meetings took place, new schools could meet the needs of children, listened to pupil voice, and if possible provided support to ensure moves were smooth and stability achieved in the new placement.
- With MALAP partners, we reviewed our use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and are now implementing a process that includes this assessment tool in annual reviews.
- The Thrive attachment approach is fully embedded and we piloted the new Thrive senior leadership training.
- In addition to our usual work with pupils, schools and providers to improve engagement and find alternatives to exclusion, we funded holiday clubs, held a lottery funded summer camp at our local forest school Stomping Ground and introduced Educational Psychology drop-in clinics to support Designated Teachers working with looked after children in challenging circumstances.
- The introduction of a new live attendance form in the ePEP has meant that we can monitor individual pupils more closely and provide swifter interventions when needed.
- With the Early Years service, we have access to the Early Years school readiness passports for looked after children, so that we are aware from an earlier age if additional support is needed when children transition to Year 1.



School placement moves



WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

CORPORATE PARENTING

This year the Virtual School Headteacher and Senior Manager for Northumberland Adolescent Services worked with the Service Director for Children's Social Care to launch a whole council approach to corporate parenting. This initiative is supported and directed by the council's Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Advisory Group and is a priority for improvement for the Lead Member for Children's Services.

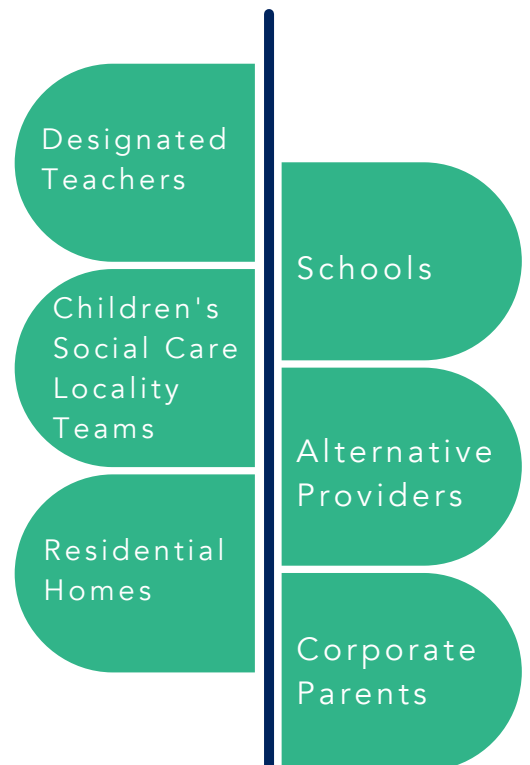
- On-line training and face to face training packages have been developed to support all council services to write a Promise to our looked after children and care leavers.
- Corporate parenting is being promoted through the council's social values in procurement policy and Economic Inclusion and Skills Forum.
- The Care Leavers' Covenant was in place for the fourth year and through partnership working this continued to have a positive impact on getting more care leavers into education, training and employment. The covenant is now part of the council's corporate parenting strategy and continues to have management oversight from the Virtual School Headteacher through the newly formed Corporate Parenting Management Group.
- Founded in Northumberland, the digital platform globalbridge is working with education and industry across the UK to connect talent to opportunity on academic and vocational pathways into education, training and employment. The Virtual School worked with globalbridge and the council's digital team to create a secure area on the platform for care leavers where they can create their own 'e-portfolio' to evidence their knowledge, character, skills and achievements. This resource was delivered through our Care Leavers' Covenant and went live in September 2021.

MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

We have achieved greater breadth and depth in our multi-agency working and this is having a positive impact on outcomes for children.

- We are participating in regional work with Virtual Schools and Adopt North East, and now attend the adoption panel as well as the foster panel.
- Integrated work with the Youth Justice Service (through Northumberland Adolescent Services) has significantly reduced the criminalisation of looked after children, and this is evident for all ages including Post 16.
- Our relationship with foster carers and the Family Placement Service was galvanized during the pandemic and we now enjoy a fully integrated and mutually supportive working relationship. The Virtual School arranged drop-in sessions about covering careers guidance and support with learning; to improve communication we contributed regularly to the Foster Carers' newsletter and Family Placement newsletter; we also facilitated training sessions from Roar, Britannica, Educational Psychologists, Thrive, Lexia and Night Zoo Keeper (writing resource).

Training and practice updates provided to:



WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY

PUPIL VOICE

With the Designated Teacher Working Group the pupil voice section of the ePEP was reviewed, with supporting resources to help schools to have meaningful conversations with children. The new page gives all professionals with access to the ePEP an insight into each pupil and their views of their experiences of school, and also monitors the responses of adults to what they say.

The Virtual School has invested in Widgit for all Designated teachers, an inclusion tool for children to help them to express their views visually. It is designed for those who are non-communicative or who avoid engaging in conversation as part of the PEP process.

The resource has been made available to all schools.

Mainly through Educational Psychology consultations, the Virtual School has supported the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice model, and in doing so has listened to the views of our children.

"I need support for my thinking styles and anxiety. I really enjoy school and want to do well so that I can go to university."

Pupil



We listened and a Virtual School teacher asked the school to arrange a quiet room for the pupil to work in. He told us that made a difference.

"Sometimes I feel unsafe when there are too many people around me and too much carry on."

Pupil



We listened and a Virtual School Educational Psychologist worked with the pupil on effective study methods, learning styles and metacognitive techniques.





This has been an extraordinary year with much to celebrate but also many new challenges to overcome. We made progress with our priorities for improvement (in year 1 of a 2-year plan) with the majority of our 'headlines' already good or improving, and a clear understanding of what we need to prioritise for next year.

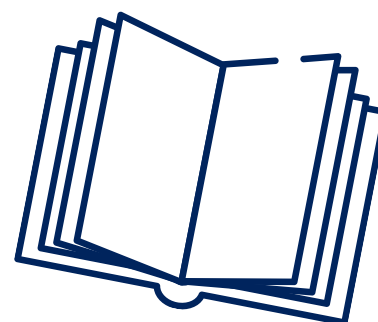
The education achievement of Northumberland's looked after children improves when they enter care, and the highest achievers are those who have been in care the longest. 80% of our pupils who achieved 5+ GCSEs with grades 9 – 5 had been in care for at least 3 years.

KEY STAGES 1 TO 3

Pupils are getting back on track, although some are finding that more difficult than others and realistically it will take some time before pupils close the gaps in their learning caused by the pandemic and start to make real progress towards achieving their potential.

In Years 3, 5 and 7 the proportion of looked after children working in their age-related curriculum was either as good as or better than last year. However, in all other year groups there are fewer children working in their age-related curriculum than last year (in reading, writing, English and Maths), attributed to the continued disruption to learning since September 2020. There is a noticeable weakness in writing. There is an urgent need to get pupils back on track as soon as possible.

Our actions during the year have already started to have an impact. The Virtual School increased pupil usage of Lexia by 60%, which meant that more children have been able to access this excellent programme to improve their reading levels. Those who regularly used the programme saw reading improve by at least one level, some have increased by two levels.



KEY STAGE 4

For the third consecutive year achievement at GCSE continued to improve and has almost tripled since 2019. 33% of pupils achieved grade 4+ in the Basics (English and Maths) and a record 7 pupils achieved the Basics at grade 5+. More pupils are in good and outstanding schools and benefited from being awarded centre assessment grades rather than taking exams. The 14 pupils in alternative provision also achieved well.



Improved outcomes in the Basics means that more young people are continuing in education and have accessed higher level qualifications, particularly at level 3. To sustain and improve on this, we need to get the numbers of children following their age-related curriculum in Key Stages 1 to 3 back to pre-pandemic levels or better.

We need to work with schools to change this pattern by Year 9 to prevent it from becoming a barrier to pupils accessing English and Maths GCSE and potentially resulting in underachievement by the end of Year 11. It also remains our priority to retain young people in their chosen post 16 pathway to improve the education, training and employment rates at age 17 (currently 76%) and age 18 (currently 54%).



Even though GCSE results improved since last year, there were challenging circumstances for the Year 11 cohort that required consistently high levels of support from the ESLAC team, Designated Teachers and multi-agency partners. Until 1st January 2021 pupils expected to be taking GCSE exams in the summer so the school closure and remote learning for the Spring Term was unexpected and not a substitute for in-school teaching and contact with adults. With 45 pupils (37 entered for at least one GCSE) this was the largest ever Year 11 cohort that the Virtual School has experienced. 11 pupils entered care during Key Stage 4, 2 having been previously permanently excluded from school, so achieving stability that would have a positive impact on achievement was a challenge. Well done to the 4 pupils entering care in Year 11 who did achieve the Basics.

POST 16

The destinations of our school leavers into further education and level 3 courses, and the continued success of those engaged in higher education demonstrates that we are providing the right support to develop meaningful pathways for school leavers into education, training and employment. Achievements at all post-16 stages are at record levels in Northumberland!

91%

91% of the 2021 Year 11 school leavers are in education, training and employment which is an improvement since last year. 4 young people are NEET but are planning pathways with our careers' advisers and will engage with EET when their current circumstances change.

80% of the cohort progressed to further education with an increase to 15 pupils following Level 3 courses, which is a third of this large and complex cohort! A record breaking 9 care leavers are studying A-levels or a combination of A-levels and BTECs.

80%

Two care leavers completed their A-Levels and will progress to university and an NHS supported internship. 3 care leavers have followed and completed Level 3 courses and are progressing into employment. 2 care leavers completed their degrees and are progressing to employment as a nursery nurse (prior to training as a teacher) and a social worker with Manchester Council and 2 care leavers completed their Masters' degrees.

FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Even though the numbers of children moving in and out of care was fluid and started to fall, there has been a rise in the number of children of statutory school age coming into care, particularly at age 14 to 16. For many children their behaviour has been more challenging due to instability, circumstances and typically the children not managing change well.

This put pressure on our resources and our Designated Teachers and made us think differently about some aspects of our service delivery.

We have a good understanding of the reasons why school placements are not as stable as we want them to be and are confident that the actions underway will have a positive impact in the new academic year if there is no further disruption to education caused by the pandemic. Better involvement with placement planning and working with schools to reduce fixed term exclusions have mitigated the full impact of disruption and provide us with a firm basis for further improvement.

PRIORITY

It remains a priority to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions, mid-year school moves and rates of persistent absence from school. For Northumberland's pupil population there has been a reduction in fixed-term exclusions, however for looked after children there has been a significant rise compared to last year that puts our looked after children at a further disadvantage and potentially increases their risk and vulnerability when not in school.

REACTIVE

There has been an increase in emotion-based school avoidance. Our looked after children coped well in smaller class sizes during lockdown but found it difficult to readjust to the return of full classes. This often presented as extreme behaviour due to previous experiences and an inability to self-regulate. The ESLAC team had to be reactive in responding to requests for support and overcome the barriers to strong relationship building in the context of social distancing. This is reflected in the increase in fixed term exclusions and is a priority for next year

SUPPORT & MOMENTUM

Our Educational Psychologists are in high demand and were able to develop more attachment aware and trauma informed schools through delivery of a comprehensive training programme and continued investment in Thrive.

This gained momentum in partnership with C.A.R.E. Northumberland and the strategic transformational work of Be You. Through the extended duty of Virtual School Headteachers to promote the education of children with a social worker, we will build on this momentum as a priority next year.



C.A.R.E.
NORTHUMBERLAND
Caring about Adversity, Resilience and Empowerment



Be you

Children with special educational needs and disabilities are getting a better experience, thanks to the investment in expertise and productive integrated working with partners, driven by the themed audit action plan. Despite the challenges, the increase in pupils with EHCPs (and reduction of pupils with SEND/K code) indicates our successful drive to identify and meet needs.

The impact of the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding held centrally by the Virtual School is positive. The investment in educational psychology, teachers and careers' guidance is demonstrated by pupil progress, destinations at 16 and the consistent growth in the numbers of young people in further and higher education. The largest proportion of centrally held PP+ is invested in staffing, and the impact of this is evident through the range of interventions we deliver and our highly valued educational psychology work.

Evaluating the impact of the grant dispersed to schools will be a priority next year to ensure good value for money and the effectiveness of our Pupil Premium Plus policy. Some PEPs do not record well enough the issues faced by pupils, particularly those most affected by the disruption to learning, and this will be evaluated against the use of PP+ to meet those needs effectively.

There is convincing evidence that positive working relationships exist with schools.

Maintaining the 13 year record of no permanent exclusions for looked after children is testament to the strength of our partnership working. Managed moves and alternative provision can sometimes be the solution to avoid permanent exclusion, but this is always needs led and child centred with a focus on engagement with education.



PRIORITIES FOR 2022

- 1 Fulfil the new duty for Virtual School Headteachers to promote the education of children with a social worker.
- 2 Achieve better stability in school placements.
- 3 Improve retention of care leavers in education, training and employment.
- 4 Ensure that progress is back on track so that more pupils are able to access their age-related curriculum.
- 5 Develop attachment aware and trauma informed schools.
- 6 Provide leadership for a whole council approach to corporate parenting.
- 7 Improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers with SEND.

A NOTE ABOUT DATA

The data used in this report is local to Northumberland and quality assured by the Data Unit and Virtual School. Due to the global pandemic exams and assessments were cancelled again this summer. Pupils in Year 11 and those following post-16 courses received results using centre assessment grades calculated by their teachers.

There is no official summative achievement data for other year groups and the DfE will not be collecting, validating or publishing regional and national data for comparison. Schools, and Virtual Schools, are not required to report on or publish achievement data this year, including for Year 11.

USEFUL REFERENCES

1. Northumberland Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021 refresh
2. National Association of Virtual School Headteachers, www.navsh.org.uk
3. Understanding progress in the 2020/21 academic year Interim findings January 2021 DfE
4. Care leavers' experiences of support during the Covid-19 pandemic Executive Summary March 2021 (Anglia Ruskin University)

	2021		2020		2019	
	Local data, not validated		Local data, not validated			
	No of pupils	%	No of pupils	%	No of pupils	%
KS4, the basics	45	33	28	29	26	12
Year 11 EET	45	91	28	86	30	85
Further Education (Yrs 12 & 13)	31	63	28	75	30	70
A Levels/Level 3	5	100	5	100	3	100
Higher Education	2	100	4	100	5	80
Total Absence	286	8	298	9	168	7
Persistent Absence	71	25	47	17	18	9
Fixed term exclusions	35 pupils 66 exc 22 schools	12	28 pupils 53 exc 21 schools	9	18 pupils 41 exc 12 schools	7
Permanent exclusions	286	0	298	0	168	0
Good & outstanding schools	286	75	298	69	168	63
Mid-year school moves	94	25	48	17	29	11
PEP Completion	286	98	298	72	194	73

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this publication is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of production. Data sources are available upon request.

OTHER FORMATS

If you need this information in large print, Braille, Audio, or in another format or language please contact us: 0345 600 6400.

If you are Deaf or can't speak on the phone, contact us using Relay UK. Download the Relay UK app or using your existing text phone prefix our dedicated text Relay number: 018001 01670 623 515. British Sign Language users can contact us using an online sign language interpreting service: northumberlandcc-cs.signvideo.net

Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF. Telephone: 0345 600 6400.

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Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 3 February 2022

[Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2020-21: Safeguarding Children in Northumberland](#)

Report of Paula Mead, NSSP Independent Chair and Scrutineer

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner-Thompson

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the work by the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership 2020-21.

Recommendations

Members to note the content of the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) Annual Report 2020-21.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the "We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for" and "We want to make a difference" priorities included in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key Issues:

1. The Annual Report describes the work undertaken between September 2020 and August 2021 of the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP). It evaluates the impact of partner's strategic decision-making and the subsequent outcomes on operational safeguarding activity during the year. It looks forward; outlining future plans and makes recommendations for improvement.
2. The report describes achievements and progress, as well as challenges, for the NSSP during the year.
3. The NSSP collates the findings and analyses the learning from local safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs). During this period there have been 2 LCSPRs, 3 learning reviews and 4 rapid reviews. Two joint child/adult reviews, undertaken in the previous reporting period, were published this year.
4. The safeguarding partners reviewed the strategic priorities last year; new priorities were developed with work on previous priorities embedded as business as usual.
5. Priorities focus on children and young people's mental health, suicide and self-harm; the impact of domestic abuse on children, including child to parent violence and abuse (CPVA); safeguarding children under 1 year old (the most vulnerable age-group) and we continue work with Neglect which remains a stubborn cause for concern in the county.
6. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the challenges of day-to-day life for many people in Northumberland and is therefore a focus within all our priorities and

work. It is within this environment that the NSSP provides leadership, oversight and quality assurance of safeguarding activity.

7. Overall, there is evidence of progress, with good engagement and partnership working adding value on the front-line, within an integrated children and adult Multi Agency Safeguarding (Hub- MASH).
8. Agencies are engaging with children and young people, although there is more work needed to build their lived experience into practice.
9. Partners need to continue to evaluate which interventions work and adds value through multi-agency audits, shared intelligence, deep-dives and evidence-based, reflective practice.

Background

This report covers the second year of the Northumberland Safeguarding Strategic Partnership (NSSP) arrangements which began on 5th August 2019, replacing the local safeguarding children board (LSCB). This change was required by legislation in line with the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Relevant local organisations and agencies have a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions.

The NSSP has a statutory duty to prepare and publish an Annual Report which analyses and assesses how our partners safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Our primary responsibility is to provide a way for the local organisations that have a responsibility in respect of child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that they do so effectively.

Implications

Policy	The Annual Report 2020-21 demonstrates the extent to which the functions of the NSSP, as set out in the national statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018) are being effectively fulfilled.
Finance and value for money	No direct implications
Legal	The Annual Report 2020-21 evidences how NSSP arrangements meet the statutory duty to prepare and publish an Annual Report demonstrating how partners safeguard vulnerable children and young people. In accordance with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018).
Procurement	No direct implications
Human Resources	Safeguarding investigations can in some circumstances lead to disciplinary action against staff. Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff working in Northumberland County Council.

FACS Scrutiny 6 January 2022

Property	No direct implications
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	This is an information report so does not require an EIA. Referral statistics suggest that the gender and ethnic balance of safeguarding referrals broadly match those of the care management caseload.
Risk Assessment	Management of risks in individual cases is a core element of safeguarding. There are various multi-agency risk assessment groups including Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and the Missing Slavery, Exploited and Trafficked Group (MSET).
Crime & Disorder	Northumbria Police are members of the NSSP as are Safer Northumberland Partnership, and there is close joint working to ensure that prompt and appropriate action is taken where it is thought that a crime may have been committed.
Customer Consideration	There is a continuing need to ensure that children and young people are adequately protected from the risk of abuse or exploitation and children and young people in need are offered the services to maintain their health and development
Carbon reduction	No direct implications
Health and Wellbeing	Promoting the safety, welfare, health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people is the primary function of the NSSP and its work.
Wards	All

Background papers:

Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) Final Annual Report 2020-21

Report sign off.

Paula Mead NSSP Independent Chair and Scrutineer

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FACS Scrutiny 6 January 2022

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Northumberland
Strategic Safeguarding Partnership



Safeguarding Children in Northumberland

NSSP Annual Report

2020-2021



Foreword

by the NSSP Independent Scrutiny and Assurance Chair

The Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership came into effect in August 2019, replacing the local safeguarding children board as required by legislation.

Over the period covered by this report, the ongoing impact of the pandemic on our community has been significant. The evidence in the report demonstrates that safeguarding partner's and relevant agencies have responded creatively to deliver safe services, offering families and children support whilst managing the risks presented by COVID-19. This report will therefore inevitably include a focus of the impact of the pandemic on families, children and young people's mental ill health and well-being, and the substantial consequences of isolation on safeguarding. During this time Northumberland has continued to receive referrals for safeguarding reviews from the partnership as well as increasing numbers of reports of children living in households experiencing domestic abuse.

It is within this context that the NSSP continues to focus on driving quality frontline practice around protection, prevention, exploitation and contextual safeguarding. Independent challenge and scrutiny of data, audit and intelligence is analysed in the report, identifying the achievements and the stubborn challenges for the partnership. The learning and improvement cycle continues, with work ongoing to measure the impact of services on children's outcomes.

The service pressures experienced by agencies and, particularly on front-line workers, are not underestimated. I would like to express my appreciation and sincere thanks for the commitment and innovation all partners have shown over the past year.



Paula Mead

Independent Safeguarding Scrutiny
and Assurance Chair of Northumberland
Strategic Safeguarding Partnership

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1. Introduction

This report covers the second year of the Northumberland Safeguarding Strategic Partnership (NSSP) arrangements which began on 5th August 2019. This change was required by legislation in line with the implementation of the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

To ensure transparency for children, families and practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners are required to publish a yearly report setting out what they, and relevant agencies, have done as a result of the new arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice. In other words what value these new provisions have added in terms of impact. The report will include;

- evidence of the impact of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work, including outcomes for children and families, from early help to looked-after children and care leavers
- an analysis of areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- evidence of decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report's period, or planned to be taken, to implement the recommendations of local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including resulting improvements
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- a review of the use of restraint in Northumberland's secure children's home.

1.1 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) for 2020-2021

Relevant local organisations and agencies have a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their functions. The responsibility for this coordination rests with the three safeguarding partners (the Local Authority, Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG]) who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements for agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area.

A North and South of Tyne Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) reports annually to the Health and Well-Being Board. The annual report, which will be published later this year, is provided

to the NSSP for information and to provide evidence that influences the partnership's priorities and planning.

NSSP sub-groups drive operations through their agreed workplans; these governance arrangements and membership are set out in [Appendix 1: Governance Structure](#) and [Appendix 2: NSSP Membership](#).

The NSSP budget and expenditure are set out in [Appendix 3: NSSP Staffing and Budget](#).

Northumberland's demographics are set out in [Appendix 4: Northumberland; Context & Information](#).

1.2 Independent Scrutiny

One of the changes in the new arrangements, is the way in which independent oversight of the NSSP is achieved.

Previously, this function was undertaken by an Independent Chair. Currently, an Independent Scrutineer provides assurance through critical challenge to the partnership, and analysis of its strengths and areas for development in order to hold the safeguarding partners and the relevant agencies to account.

There are a number of context-appropriate methods to achieve the scrutiny function and the role of Independent Scrutineer is just one element.

Challenges and responses raised between partners are explicitly logged in the partnership minutes.

A multi-agency audit tool provides assurance to ensure partners, including Primary Care, are compliant with Section 11 of the Children Act,

2004. Schools, Northumberland college and alternative education providers complete Section 175 safeguarding standards audits that are monitored and reviewed annually in September aligned with updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance.

Ofsted conducted a JTAI in 2019 examining multi-agency arrangements for dealing with criminal and sexual exploitation; progress of the action plan is monitored by the partnership.

A peer review of the partnership is planned for the coming year.

To ensure the independence of the assurance and impact of the partnership's work outlined in this report, it has been prepared by the Independent Scrutineer and will be made widely available for scrutiny to the Health and Well-Being Board and the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It will then be published on the [NSSP Website](#).



2. What the MASA in Northumberland have achieved at a glance



Our multi-agency responses to children at risk of criminal & sexual exploitation and MDS has been strengthened through a joint children/adults CSE strategy and delivery plan, and a proactive JTAI action plan

Northumberland's Sharing Information Regarding Safeguarding (SIRS) recognised as a best practice model by the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel

School exclusions have been reduced from 50 in school year 2019/20 to 44 in school year 2020/21

We have made tangible progress with Early Help. The percentage of successfully completed Early Help involvements has risen from 68% to 76% and reduced the number of children who receive Early Help interventions needing further involvement of statutory services

Increased strategic alignment with NSSP, SAB and Community Safety

94% of young people's cases did not need to be re-examined at Missing, Slavery, Exploitation and Trafficking (MSET). An increase from 83% in the previous year

Northumberland CCG bid for investment in the 'Mental Health Support Teams in School Trailblazer' and the 'Four Week Wait' (from referral to treatment) pilot funding Outcome - waiting times have more than halved



We have refreshed our priorities to focus on 'stubborn' challenges

We have progressed our work within the Tyne & Wear and Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership to maximise resources and share learning across the wider region



3. Strategic Priorities; Achieving our Objectives

During this reporting period, the safeguarding partners commissioned a review of NSSP strategic priorities. They wanted to take stock of the extent to which the partnership's objectives were being met and whether they still added value to the safeguarding system. Stakeholders from relevant agencies reviewed and made recommendations for changes by evaluating progress based on evidence from audits, data and local intelligence. Work around previous priorities continues, however they are embedded as business as usual in the partnership's work.

These are demanding times; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the challenges of day-to-day life for many people in the wider North East with exceptional levels of poverty driving dramatic rises in child protection intervention and the number of children in care¹. It is within this environment that the NSSP aims to provide leadership, oversight and quality assurance of safeguarding in

Northumberland. The Quality Improvement and Performance (QIP) subgroup has identified a range of multi-agency, qualitative and quantitative measures which will enable the NSSP to monitor impact and inform the safeguarding partners planning.

The priorities were re-focused in-year therefore this report presents both sets and explains the decision-making behind the changes;

¹ North East Submission to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. July 2021



3.1 Priorities 2018-2020

Priorities 2018-2020	WHAT WE DID AND ITS IMPACT																					
<p>Further promoting preventative and early help approaches</p>	<p>The Early Help offer is now firmly embedded and part of the routine work of the partnership. The percentage of successfully completed Early Help involvements has risen from 68% to 73% for the quarter ending June 2021. More broadly, workloads have increased in early help and this, as well as other preventative work, have been key to ensuring that statutory services have not been overwhelmed during the pandemic. Importantly, it ensured that children, young people and families have been supported at the earliest opportunity and at the lowest appropriate level.</p> <p>The ambition, supported by a multi-agency, early intervention approach was to have fewer children looked after reducing to 60 per 10,000 of the under 18 population. Whilst it has not reduced to achieve this target, there has been a reduction in the numbers since December 2020, reducing from a high of 455 and is currently remaining at around 435. Alongside the range of preventative and early intervention services, focused work to ensure plans for discharge from care are progressed in a timely way where possible have also underpinned the reduction in numbers. The current rate is 73 per 10,000, having reduced from December 2020 and this is the second lowest in the region.</p> <p>The Early Help and Early Intervention sub-committee continue to monitor this work on behalf of the NSSP.</p> <p>While risk assessed face to face visits continued for the most vulnerable families, virtual delivery of all the programmes on the pathway have been quickly adapted and delivered by partners. This has resulted in an increase in the sustained engagement target of the most vulnerable families in our 30% and under Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) areas. Rising from 12% (July 20) to 49% (June 21) with the biggest increase in the West locality from 29% to 83%. This positive work is now the subject of an Applied Research Bid (ARC) led jointly by EH managers and both universities in Newcastle.</p> <p>There has been an increase in referrals to Early Help during the period of the pandemic, particularly at key times such as prior to lockdown in December 2020 and schools opening in March 2021:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 1624 1236 1955"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th>Increase</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Sept 2019</td> <td>Sept 2020</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>399</td> <td>476</td> <td>19.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dec 2019</td> <td>Dec 2020</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>325</td> <td>398</td> <td>22.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mar 2020</td> <td>March 2021</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>373</td> <td>444</td> <td>19.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Reflecting the impact of this work, the number of children with early help episodes that ended successfully remains consistent month on month, with a 12-month average of 76%.</p>			Increase	Sept 2019	Sept 2020		399	476	19.3%	Dec 2019	Dec 2020		325	398	22.5%	Mar 2020	March 2021		373	444	19.0%
		Increase																				
Sept 2019	Sept 2020																					
399	476	19.3%																				
Dec 2019	Dec 2020																					
325	398	22.5%																				
Mar 2020	March 2021																					
373	444	19.0%																				

Priorities 2018-2020	WHAT WE DID AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Further promoting preventative and early help approaches (continued)</p>	<p>When monitoring the children who have had early help episodes, who later go on to be involved with social work within 12 months, it is encouraging to see a downward trend; 22% falling to 19%.</p> <p>Early Help Family Workers (EHFW) have been providing a 'duty' system during the pandemic. Families can call for help and support. This has been successful in preventing the escalation of family issues into more targeted work and plans are in place to continue this service after the pandemic. EHFW have dealt with 2,686 duty calls during the pandemic, this includes 1,217 families (3,099 clients).</p>
<p>Working with Fathers</p>	<p>Progress has continued to be made with this priority since focussing on it following Kirsty, Molly and Olivia Serious Case Reviews (SCR's). This is demonstrated through audits and evidence gathering for Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews.</p> <p>The chairperson of SPRG undertook a multi-agency audit into the role of fathers when families are involved in child in need or safeguarding processes. The findings were reviewed by the Quality Improvement and Performance sub-committee; further work continues to ensure men are engaged with and fully assessed to optimise their maximum ability as parents as well as to identify risk.</p> <p>The CCG, in partnership with Northumbria NHS Foundation Trust (NHCFT), have continued to roll out SIRS (Sharing Information Regarding Safeguarding) across primary care and maternity services to recognise relevant information regarding fathers of unborn babies in order to identify any early support required or highlight risks. This resulted in a number of cases being spotted than would otherwise have been. It led to actions ranging from offers of Early Help to proactively protecting babies from harm under statutory procedures.</p> <p>The Designated Nurse and Named Midwife have presented the project to other areas in the region with a view to wider roll out. The Designated Nurse was asked to present the project to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (National Panel) as evidence of emerging good practice as part of their third national thematic review on non-accidental injuries in the under ones and specifically the role of fathers. This work was referenced in "The Myth of Invisible Men" Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers, published in September 2021.</p> <p>You can find the report here.</p>

Priorities 2018-2020	WHAT WE DID AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice</p>	<p>Work continues to inform the direction of the NSSP through increased alignment with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).²</p> <p>The "Fiona" Learning Review, recommended a baseline audit to establish how agencies meet the needs of vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds, and the significant challenges that undermine agencies efforts to meet those needs. An Appreciative Inquiry methodology is being used to engage with young people who have experienced the care system, gathering their views on what worked well for them, in order to develop the audit tool.</p> <p>The ILACS Ofsted inspection in 2020 noted the effectiveness of the engagement with and understanding of the experiences of children and young people.</p>
<p>Criminal and Sexual Exploitation</p>	<p>Identified as a priority during a JTAI and now embedded as NSSP business as usual. A joint, three partnership (NSSP, NSAB and Community Safety) Exploitation Group and Delivery plan continue to drive forward this work which now includes Trafficking and Modern Slavery.</p>

² See Section 6



3.2 Priorities 2020-2023 – Our Rationale

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Overarching Priority</p> <p>Understanding how COVID-19 and associated lockdowns have impacted on safeguarding children and young people – including, but not limited to, increased service demand, access to health services, understanding impact, and multi-agency responses to it</p>	<p>The pandemic has amplified the risks to the NSSP’s safeguarding systems and is therefore represented in all priorities.</p> <p>A multi-agency Risk Register was created with the purpose of logging safeguarding lockdown-specific risks, identifying controls and assurances to mitigate these risks.</p> <p>Analysis of Referral Numbers by Partners; One particular concern was that children at risk of harm would not be identified by agencies due to the restrictions, this was monitored and referral numbers to Children’s Social Care (CSC) did fluctuate during 2020/21. The number of referrals received since April 2020 are lower than the levels seen prior to the pandemic (2,589 in 2020/21 compared to 3182 in 2019/20), and Northumberland’s referral rate for that period was significantly below the national, regional and statistical neighbour averages. Whether this was a result of hidden harms or the effectiveness of Early Help is not clear. This may not be a fully sustained trend as the numbers of referrals received in Qtr. 1 of 2021/22 exceeded the same period in the previous year. Children’s safeguarding referrals generated from NHCFT to CSC have significantly increased by 24% from Qtr. 4. These referrals have continued to be predominantly made by NSECH (where parents or their children are presenting to A&E with safeguarding concerns) and also from midwifery and from the Trust’s community settings.</p> <p>Mitigations. In the early days of the pandemic effective liaison and monitoring between health, education and children’s social care, was developed as a matter of urgency and multi-agency support was made available to assist vulnerable children’s return to school where additional needs were identified.</p> <p>All agencies recognised early on the potential safeguarding impact of the pandemic on Disabled Children & Young People (DC&YP). There was concern about the impact on DC&YP and their families from not attending school and not being able to access respite/short break care, as well as uncertainty for families about employment, loss of income and impact on mental and emotional health. The findings from a survey undertaken by the Strategic Lead for SEND provides evidence of the pressures on C&YP with SEND and their families during the pandemic. Children with an EHCP and those with a Social Worker were eligible to attend school during lockdown but, initially, very few did.</p>

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Overarching Priority</p> <p>Understanding how COVID-19 and associated lockdowns have impacted on safeguarding children and young people – including, but not limited to, increased service demand, access to health services, understanding impact, and multi-agency responses to it</p> <p><i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>School attendance of the number of C&YP who had a Social Worker, including those at Special Needs School's, steadily increased over the weeks of lockdown. There are examples of wide-ranging and proactive approaches of many schools to support C&YP and their families during this period. Where there have been concerns about inequity of access to Special Needs Schools in parts of the county, members of the NSSP have provided information to make the case for need and clarify issues regarding health risks for complex children. In the early stages of the pandemic, risk/benefit analysis statements were written to support discussions around Covid-19 risk for children attending Special Needs Schools. They highlighted the potential for escalation to safeguarding concerns for children not accessing school following pressure from families.</p> <p>Covid-19 continues to have an impact and it is expected that this will be exacerbated following the national guidelines changing on 19/07/21. A causal link is anticipated between the end of the school summer holidays and an increase in children's referrals which there has been historically year on year.</p>
<p>Mental Health; Suicide, Self-Harm, Social Media Impact/Bullying</p>	<p>Impact of Covid-19 on mental health. Across the country, children and young people have been severely affected by the pandemic. Increased family stress, decreased social interaction and reduced access to support services have fuelled concern for children and young people's mental health during lockdown. The majority of young people (83%) with existing mental health needs report that the pandemic has made their health worse (Mental Health Impact Assessment Scoping Paper – Covid-19 Northumberland).</p> <p>There has been an increase in the number of referrals for mental health to health agencies over the last year. For example, this increased from 565 to 608 to tier 3 Children & Young Peoples Service (CYPS) and from 21 up to 45 to NHCFT. There has also been an increase in the number of referrals categorised as self-harm that have been received by NHCFT. These referrals continue to be responded to in a timely way by CYPS and Primary Mental Health Workers (PMHW's) despite the increased volume. CSC is now able to flag referrals from other agencies where the child's mental or emotional health appears to be factor, and there have been high numbers in the last quarter: Of the 1,945 households referred to CSC, 558 had child mental health flagged (29%) and 722 had child emotional health flagged (37%).</p> <p>A Disability Dashboard was developed to enable scrutiny of data about safeguarding DC&YP in Northumberland. Consistent themes within this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism and ADHD with and without Learning Disability are the commonest categories of disability of C&YP with CIN and CPP plans. They include more boys than girls (73% male, 23% female). • Peak age range of these C&YP open to CSC 10-15 year olds (52%)

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Mental Health; Suicide, Self-Harm, Social Media Impact/Bullying (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a concern that the proportion of CPP's for DC&YP remains low at around 4% of the total plans when national data indicates that disabled C&YP are at increased risk of neglect and abuse. Audits are underway to understand this, for example are plans correctly coded. <p>With regards to bullying, school exclusion data for the 2021/22 academic year shows that there has been a slight increase in the proportion that were categorised as bullying compared to the previous year, although that is within the context that schools were fully open for longer.</p> <p>There have been 2 cases of children committing suicide in the last year (see section 4.1. What have we learnt from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews?).</p> <p>At the beginning of the pandemic all cases open to CYPS were RAG rated to identify which young people required additional support during Covid-19. A daily MDT was held to discuss any highlighted change to a young person's risk profile due to deterioration in mental health and to plan what steps needed to be actioned to support them.</p> <p>Face to Face clinical appointments continued for those young people who had been discussed at daily MDT and it was felt that this was the best way to support the young person.</p> <p>Collective investment by partners in mental health services has resulted in substantial growth and enhancement across the whole system, including but not limited to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early help and prevention - growth of Early Help Mental Health workforce; PMHW team grown from 5 staff in 2018 to 34 staff currently. • Identified opportunities across the system for specialist CYP MH staff – LAC/MASH /Youth Offending/Substance Misuse Service. • The CYPS Universal Crisis Team pathway has now been increased to 24/7 provision. • A 24 hour Enhanced Psychiatric Liaison Team now review young people within 1 hour of attending A&E and 4 hours if admitted to the Paediatric Ward. • Outcomes Framework Tool developed to measure impact across the system. • Implementation of accessible consultation pathways to mental health and wellbeing services for our children looked after, led by the Community Matron (Children Looked After and Access). The narrative and data to evidence the improvements were reported. <p>The partnership continues to monitor this work and progress has been made in access to services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average waiting time for those referred to mental health teams has more than halved from 8.6 weeks to 3.4 between April 2019 and March 2021. • Primary Mental Health Worker referral and waiting times have reduced whilst more children and young people have been seen. Numbers have increased from 508 in 2018/19, to 791 in 2019/20, and 1701 in 2020/21.

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
Neglect	<p>Neglect has been a priority since 2018, however it stubbornly persists as the highest category of abuse in Northumberland and although some progress has been made, it will remain a priority for the partnership. IRO's were tasked with auditing CPP's to enable the NSSP to understand underlying issues; the outcome was inconclusive with no particular feature of neglect identified.</p> <p>This quarter, referrals for neglect have risen from 49 to 95 referrals from NHCFT to CSC between Qtr.1 2020/21 and Qtr.1 2021/22. Neglect continues to be significant within the work of safeguarding partners and this is reflected within the CSC data. The majority of children subject to a child protection plan are categorised as neglect and at the end of the last quarter, 265 out of the 342 child protection plans were labelled as neglect. Separately, the local authority is now able to report on sub categories of neglect identified from the referral, and in the last quarter emotional neglect and physical neglect were the most significant factors. Going forward, we can now report on the prevalence of educational neglect, medical neglect and nutritional neglect which may be factors that could come to the fore more in the future as the pandemic continues to impact. This information should enable more targeted intervention and prevention strategies.</p> <p>There is compelling evidence of the relationship between poverty, inequality and neglect. Anecdotally, the pandemic has increased inequalities across the county and the impact of poverty on children and families.</p> <p>One of the CCG's priorities moving forward is to look at the impact of inequality on health and this will be through various means including 'Population Health Management'. Safeguarding will be a cross-cutting theme in this.</p> <p>Outcomes are difficult to quantify, however there are signs of progress;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child neglect offences have decreased by 5% from 2019/20 to 2020/21. • Five years ago, around 10% of child protection plans lasted longer than two years, whereas only one plan did so in 2020-21. • Twice as many children with learning disabilities access annual health checks than was the case in 2019, increasing to 76% in 2020/21. • A recent audit of 18 cases, chosen at random where Neglect was identified as the Child Protection plan category, demonstrates evidence of good practice as well as the areas for improvement and recommendations. The Neglect Toolkit has been adopted, particularly in Early Help, however it identified that in the audited cases, the toolkit had not been used. The auditor commented that it would have given a much richer picture of the child's life, a more consistent use of direct work being completed, resulting in plans being executed at an earlier stage. A relaunch of the toolkit was a recommended action. Further evidence-based interventions, such as Signs of Safety, are being implemented.

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Impact of Domestic Violence on children (2018-2020) - including Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA) (2020-2023)</p>	<p>The need to protect children, including the unborn baby, and adults from the risks and consequences of domestic abuse remains a key priority for the NSSP. It will now include CPVA (previously known as APVA). We know Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown has had a particular impact on victims of domestic violence and abuse both locally and nationally. Between Qtr.3 and Qtr.4 the figures have remained steady regarding domestic abuse to NHCFT patients, as have referrals for staff members to MARAC. NHCFT's Safeguarding practitioner for Domestic Abuse and Sexual violence has been on site at NSECH most days and has been providing on the spot advice and support for staff and victims of domestic abuse This is reflected in the figures for intervention for patients which has risen in Qtr.1 by 21%.</p> <p>Within the context of there being fewer referrals to CSC in the last year, the proportion where domestic abuse was a factor has remained relatively stable, this peaked in summer 2020 as did the number of domestic abuse HRNs (and this has been seen again in July 2021). There has also been an increase in the number of multi-agency risk assessment conferences compared to 2019 and NHCFT are seeing an increase in the number of MARAC referrals completed. Newly available data tells us there are 538 cases open to CSC where domestic abuse is a factor, and 38 where social workers are working with the child to parent abuse team.</p> <p>When comparing Qtr.1 2021/22 with the same period the previous year, Northumberland has seen an increase in domestic abuse activity. Northumbria Police Force wide, there has been a 6.5% increase in Domestic Abuse incidents where a child has been involved in Qtr.1 whilst Northumberland saw the largest increase (+18.6%, 129 incidents), as it did for BME victims (57.9% (11 victims), and the volume of victims aged 16-17 years 50.0% (9 victims). Northumberland had an increase in the number of high-risk victims (8.1%) and a reduction in medium risk victims (-19.8%). There has been an 8.9% increase in the volume of repeat victims in Northumberland from Qtr.1 2020/21 to Qtr. 1 2021/22, the greatest percentage increase in the Force area. Finally, whilst there was a decrease force-wide with the number of arrests from incidents associated with domestic abuse with a child involved, in Northumberland there was actually an increase of 32% (48 more arrests).</p> <p>There have been a number of developments over the last year;</p> <p>A CPVA multi agency audit was undertaken in 2020 by the Northumberland CPVA steering group. The group oversee the audit action plan that covers the key learning and actions below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o An CPVA pathway agreed by children's and adult social care that via training and comms is improving communication between ASC and CSC with joint family safety plans. o This training and comms ensure appropriate CPVA referrals to the Gatekeeper.

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
<p>Impact of Domestic Violence on children (2018-2020) - including Child to Parent Violence and Abuse (CPVA) (2020-2023 <i>(continued)</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The work of the steering group and funding secured has enabled the development of a menu of options – RYPP Link. Respect tools and the VRU funded NVR principles work – to meet the range of needs identified by the audit. <p>Operation Encompass; The Next Steps, was effective in safeguarding children during the pandemic by providing enhanced support to children, families and staff affected by domestic abuse. The main elements of the project included training for all school staff, development of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) products for Key Stages 1-4, a drop in/advice service at schools and access to new school safeguarding liaison officers (SSLOs) employed by Northumbria Police.</p> <p>To evaluate impact, using survey and case-study methodologies, schools were asked how Operation Encompass processes are working and what improvements could be made. Fifty-one education providers completed the survey and results were overwhelmingly positive. Schools agreed that it safeguarded and supported our young people.</p> <p>As part of Northumberland’s extended Operation Encompass, the CCG shares police Child Concern Notifications (CCNs) regarding domestic abuse and missing children with all GP practices to improve awareness and information sharing.</p>
<p>Safeguarding children under 1 year old including non-accidental head injuries and co-sleeping</p>	<p>Case reviews nationally have found babies are eight times more likely to be killed or seriously harmed than older children. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (National Panel) are currently undertaking a thematic review into injuries in babies under 1 year with a key focus on the role of fathers. The pressures of lockdown on families with new babies are likely to magnify issues; this supports the NSSP’s decision to identify it as a priority.</p> <p>A formal practice review has been undertaken which was delayed due to Covid -19 restrictions and will be published in the next reporting period. Factors included professional optimism, disguised compliance, parental substance misuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse. The role of father was not fully assessed. Further work is ongoing to address this.</p> <p>Within the context of referrals to CSC having reduced over the last year by over 20%, it has followed that the number of referrals, strategy discussions, s47s, ICPCs and CPPs starting for under ones have also reduced. However, the number of CPPs actually in place relating to under ones has remained fairly stable since October 2019 as have the number of under ones in care, demonstrating it is a “sticking issue”. The single most reliable factor that predicts whether the Local Authority will issue care proceedings is previous care proceedings for older siblings and when parental risk factors remain constant. 68% of new-born babies were removed from parents who had previously had children removed from their care. There were a fluctuating number of referrals made to the local authority by NHCFT in relation to unborns, 36 in Qtr.2; 65 in Qtr.3 2020/21 rising to 101 in Qtr.1 2021/22.</p>

Priorities 2020-2023	WHAT WE ARE DOING AND ITS IMPACT
Safeguarding children under 1 year old including non-accidental head injuries and co-sleeping <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Outcomes are not easy to quantify however it's important to tackle this priority upstream; early identification and prevention is underpinned by a comprehensive and effective universal service. Health surveillance data shows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of births receiving a face-to-face New Birth Visit within 14 days by a health visitor is 91.45%. Well above the target of 85% • Percentage of children receiving a 6-8 week review 77.85% down from 86.29% in the last quarter • Percentage of children who received a 12 month review 93.41% in last quarter and above the target of 90%.



4. Dealing with risk & learning from Safeguarding Practice

This section explains how learning and improvements are embedded to make progress on achieving better outcomes for children and young people.

4.1 What have we learnt from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews?

The NSSP collates the findings from local safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs), repeat learning/findings are reviewed and further audit and scrutiny is undertaken to have a broader view of the findings. There have been 2 LCSPRs, 3 learning reviews, 4 rapid reviews were held (1 learning review from a referral to SPRG regarding historic information so no rapid review was required as no serious incident notification was made). Two joint child/adult reviews undertaken in the previous reporting period were published this year.

Priority 1. Children and young people's mental health, including self-harm and suicide

The Safeguarding Practice Review Group (SPRG) has undertaken reviews of cases over this period with regard to 2 incidents of suspected child suicide. One resulted in the criteria being met for formal review, the other a learning review. Although not complete during this time period, emerging learning has been shared and added where appropriate to single and multi-agency training and the self-harm pathway amended accordingly. Covid-19 is likely to have impacted on one if not both cases due to reduction in service provision and school closures leading to reduction in access to support and the visibility of the young person to relevant agencies. An audit is planned to identify how agencies work well with young people, especially those difficult to reach. This will involve drawing on the views of what worked well for these young people themselves.

Priority 2. Neglect

SPRG undertook a learning review of a case involving the chronic neglect of a child aged 11 years. Learning has been shared across agencies and the action plan is currently being monitored by SPRG.

Priority 3. Safeguarding children under 1 year old - including non-accidental head injuries and co-sleeping

A learning review was completed regarding a small baby with serious, life-threatening head injuries. The baby was known only to universal services and no concerns identified by agencies at the time except the baby cried for significant periods. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (National Panel) requested further information which was provided. To support the learning, a new process called ICON ([ICON Link](#)) is being implemented across Northumberland to prevent non accidental head injury in babies often at increased risk of being shaken due to excessive crying. It has a number of 'touch points' throughout pregnancy and the post-natal period and is aimed at both parents. This is part of a national approach commissioned by NHSE/I. Staff training and awareness has been undertaken with GP's, midwifery, and health visiting services, and it is planned to include other agencies such as early help, children's social care and independent reviewing officers.

A formal practice review has been undertaken with regards a baby (Daniel) who sustained multiple fractures. The review was delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions and will be published in the next reporting period. Factors included professional optimism, disguised compliance, parental substance misuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse. The role of father was not fully assessed. Due to the difficulties arising from lockdown and to prevent further delays in the review process for the Daniel case, the whole review was undertaken virtually. This included running two learning events with practitioners, their managers/supervisors and other key professionals. Undertaking such sensitive and emotive work virtually can be very challenging and staff were supported throughout the process which proved a success.



5. Quality of practice and assurances; how effectively are children and young people being safeguarded in Northumberland?

Scrutiny from external inspectorates provides independent monitoring and reviewing of how well safeguarding is being carried out in Northumberland, however the pandemic has meant these processes have been suspended. The NSSP therefore considered alternative sources to ensure practice and multi-agency systems are proportionate, effective and safe.

5.1 The Clinical Commissioning Group

As one of the statutory partners the CCG has sought assurances on a quarterly basis throughout the pandemic to ensure all health care providers have adequate and appropriate arrangements in place to ensure service provision meets the needs of vulnerable families. The CCG safeguarding team attends MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings on behalf of GP practices. As part of this process and through information sharing agreements, access has been granted by most GP practices in Northumberland which allows the team to access relevant information, add appropriate coding and provide reports for the meetings on behalf of GPs and then feedback after meetings. This has greatly improved two-way information sharing for the purposes of these meetings and therefore increased awareness for GPs in primary care.

The CCG complete a Section 175 audit with Primary Care and it is in the process of being finalised for this year, Safeguarding has been included as a mandated requirement as part of primary care commissioned services, and this will further strengthen the current safeguarding systems and processes in GP practices.

5.2 Northumbria Police

The force has recently created a new Strategic Innovation Partnership Team (SIP). Within the new SIP team, there is a learning and improvement function, overseen by a Detective Inspector who will attend all learning and improvement/ quality improvement sub groups, to work with partners to drive and share internal and external learning and improvement. The SIP team will support the NSSP priorities and provides a consistent and innovative approach to Safeguarding and the development of child procedures. The Detective Inspector reviews all SCR / DHR / SAB / MAPPA reviews to identify internal and external learning and manages the police response to this to ensure learning is embedded in policy and practice and learning throughout the force.

5.2.1 Contextual Safeguarding

Northumbria Police Prevention Through Education Team have recently undertaken an awareness raising campaign about the sharing of self-generated indecent images among children. Recently the team visited 15 Northumberland schools to deliver this topic to 1206 pupils. This included 7 middle schools, 3 high schools, 4 SEN schools and 1 PRU with most children in year 8. Five of these sessions included a contribution from the Paedophile Online Investigation Team,

giving an insight into what can happen to these indecent images once shared digitally. Feedback from the schools was that the inputs were timely, shocking, well-pitched and exactly what the students needed to make them aware of consequences.

Plans are in place for a period of action in October for the team, collaborating with the Violence Reduction Unit, to highlight the effects of malicious communications and online bullying focussing on sharing indecent images.

A senior police officer chairs the MSET. Children who go missing or who are at risk of exploitation from others, receive a prompt multi-agency response. This includes well-attended strategy meetings, referral for consideration at the MSET and the offer of specialised support to help young people recognise and reduce risks. This year the partnership has tried to further improve the work of MSET by strengthening the focus on preventative risk management before young people are discussed at a full meeting and we have seen a significant reduction in young people progressing to full MSET which means that the risks are being tackled earlier and more effectively. By focussing on prevention and considering contextual risk, the force is working to create safer communities for our young people to live in.



5.3 Local Authority

5.3.1 Early Help

This case study is an example of where early intervention limited escalation and the possibility of the family's situation deteriorating into safeguarding. Prompt school action in identifying concerns at the earliest opportunity enabled an Early Help Family Worker (EHFW) to become involved and empower the family, along with support from a team around the family (TAF).

'Ally', age 10, was referred by school following a number of concerns including poor school attendance and bereavement.

The family were allocated an EHFW, who completed an Early Help Assessment (EHA) following a first knock on the door which showed the home cluttered with empty bottles of alcohol on benches. Rubbish and unwanted items were piled up inside a damp house. The quality of that first interaction was instrumental in mum opening up to support and admitting she was not coping following the death of her husband. She was leaving her two children in the morning to get ready for school alone whilst she went to work. She was at work in the evening leaving them unsupervised, something which raised anxieties for Ally who feared being left by her mum.

The worker used the Neglect Toolkit, with mum, to unpick the core issues and address them with a plan. Mum worked with her, identifying where she thought home life was sitting within the Toolkit and how she could be supported to make changes. The children's views were listened to and relayed to the TAF. Their views were essential and a key driver for mum committing to making positive changes to deliver best outcomes for the children.

Mum worked hard with the team to make changes and the use of the Neglect Toolkit proved a useful tool for her, encouraging her to reflect on her actions and the home situation whilst working out how to improve outcomes for herself and her children. Their home became decluttered and a comfortable place to be. Mum changed her working arrangements to ensure her children were a priority and, with support around benefits from the workers links to DWP, the stress regarding finances was alleviated. Dealing with these basic issues enabled the family to begin to address their grief which had underpinned the situation they found themselves in. The worker accessed resources to support the children with their grief whilst they awaited the support from the counselling service they had been referred to. Attendance improved for Ally. The family all recognised the improvement in their lives and appreciated the hands-on approach the worker had provided with the Neglect Toolkit and listening to them all had helped them come up with to their own plan on how to make changes resulting in a better place to call home and Ally attending school.



5.3.2 Children's Social Care (CSC)

Quality of practice work in-year has consistently identified the following areas of good practice and impact across the county and across services³;

- Strong, child centred practice across the main areas of social work and early help/social care activity. Direct work with and views and experiences of children are undertaken and supported in a range of creative ways.
- Thresholds are applied appropriately, and work is stepped up or down between early help and social work effectively.
- Management oversight is regular, thorough and supports the progress of the work and there is clear evidence of developing and effective use of Signs of Safety (SoS) in both early help and social work.
- Assessments in both social work and early help are thorough, detailed and effectively underpin future work.
- Plans do cover the key areas of work and improvements are evident in supporting the progress of the work, but further development is required to ensure they are consistently SMART and clear with and for children and families.
- There is good multi agency working and consistently regular care team meetings (CTM's) and children in need (CIN) meetings as well as core groups (although there is some variation across the county) which engage parents, carers and wider family members. The effectiveness of these in focusing on the plan and progress has improved, supported by the implementation of SoS, but further embedding of this is needed to ensure consistency.
- There is effective engagement of the wider family network in the majority of cases and the consistency and timeliness of this across all work can be further improved.
- Reviews are timely and include children's and parents' views effectively and focus on the experience of children and drive the progress of plans including for permanence.

- Staff in social work and early help are uniformly positive about the management, support and training that they receive.
- The local authority has continued to provide return home conversations to children and young people after they have been missing. There has been an increase in the acceptance of these conversations which have enabled young people to receive additional support, advice and signposting relating to their situation and in order to ensure they remain safe in the future.

Care Leavers.

A visit by the DfE advisor for care leavers in February 2021 found a number of positives in the quality of support for care leavers;

"The local authority is deemed 'Good' by Ofsted and it is clearly evident why they have secured this judgement. There has been rapid development in their approach to Corporate Parenting, their local offer and the extended duties that apply to care leavers up to 25 years. The local authority has worked really hard to strengthen their Corporate Parenting approach and are beginning to see the benefits of having elected members and senior officers asking the pertinent question 'is this good enough for my child'."

Work to develop a wider understanding of engagement in corporate parenting roles and responsibilities across the council, elected members and partner agencies continues.



³ General quality of practice findings (CSC self-assessment April 2021)

5.3.3 Education and Skills

The service continues to monitor safeguarding standards in education settings i.e., schools, academies, alternative providers, Free Schools and independent schools through a Section 175/157 safeguarding standards audit tool.

The number of families choosing to electively home educate has slightly decreased. Northumberland now has 309 children known to be home educated. There is no pattern or trend given by parents for choosing to do so and this is in line with what our neighbouring local authorities are telling us. There are 83 new cases since schools re-opened in March 2021 and 141 children have returned to school places during the year. Most parents are engaging with the Education Welfare service and providing evidence of work, and ongoing monitoring continues.



5.4 Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

An internal, risk-based audit found that governance, risk management and control arrangements for children and adult safeguarding provided a good level of assurance and that risks are managed effectively. A high level of compliance with the control framework was recognised. The audit identified good practice around the supervision process across the safeguarding department and positive methods of disseminating lessons learnt from safeguarding cases across the trust. The organisation has made significant investment in frontline safeguarding capacity, including a domestic abuse practitioner presence on acute hospital sites, as well as in robust training, audit and data monitoring arrangements. Impact of these measures will be reported to the NSSP.

The trust's safeguarding service were finalists in the National Patient Safety Awards (Health Safety Journal) in 2020 for the category of Safeguarding Initiative around the domestic abuse model in the trust.



The trust has embraced the Learning Disability Diamond standards to ensure health inequalities of people with a learning disability are met. This includes being fully compliant around the NHSI Learning Disability Standards. They have set up a flagging electronic system for children who have a learning disability to ensure that when a child attends hospital, a code will be in their medical record so that staff can identify that they have a learning disability and ensure reasonable adjustments are put in place as required.

5.5 Performance Priority Dashboard

Performance data, both qualitative and quantitative, measuring progress against the NSSP's priorities, has been set out and analysed in Section 3 against each of the priority areas. The dashboard below presents a summary of these data.

NSSP Priority dashboard - End of June 2021

Priority 1 - Mental health, self-harm and suicide (includes social media and bullying)

Priority 2 - Neglect

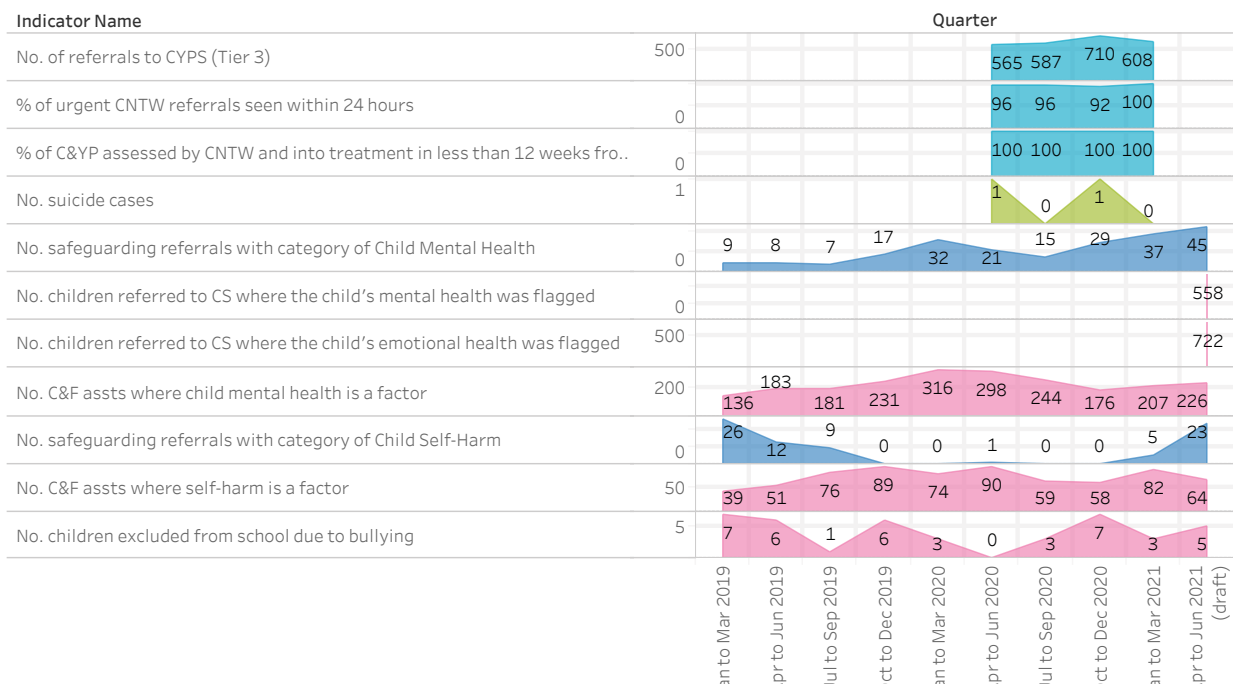
Priority 3 - Safeguarding children under 1 year old

Priority 4 - Impact of domestic abuse (DA) on children and child to parent violent abuse (CPVA)

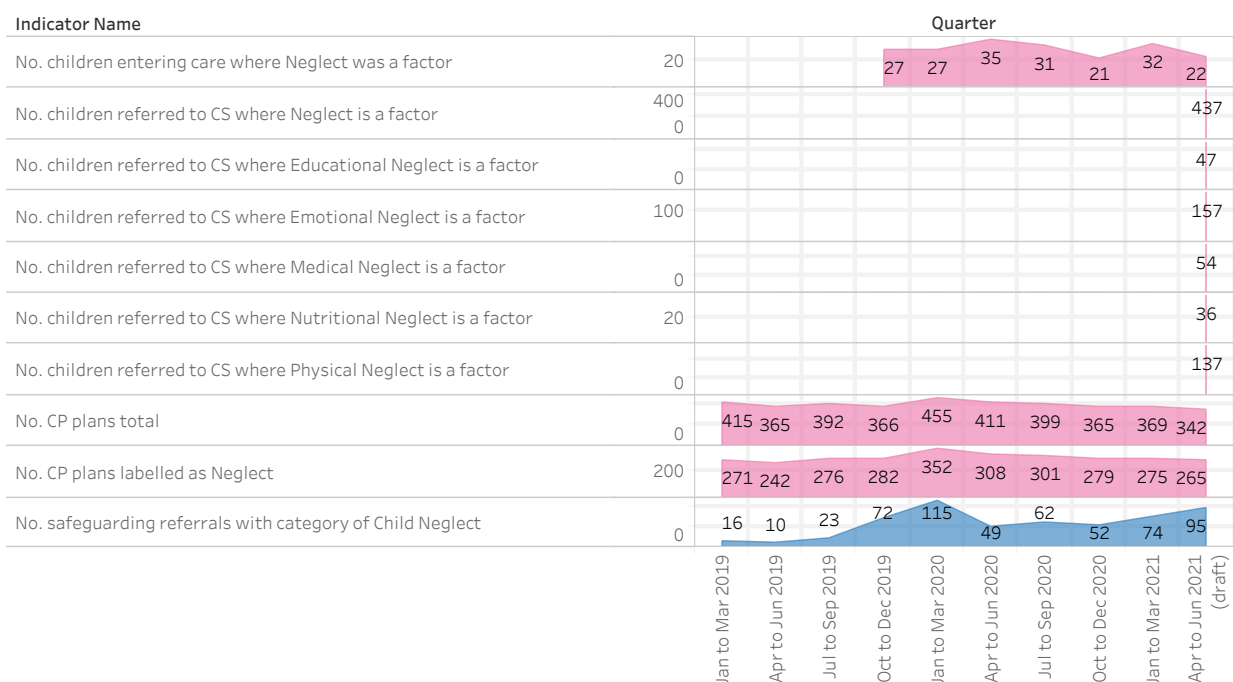
Priority 5 - Understanding how COVID-19 has impacted on safeguarding children and young people

Priority 1

Data from: CCG - CNTW - NCC CS - NHCFT - Police

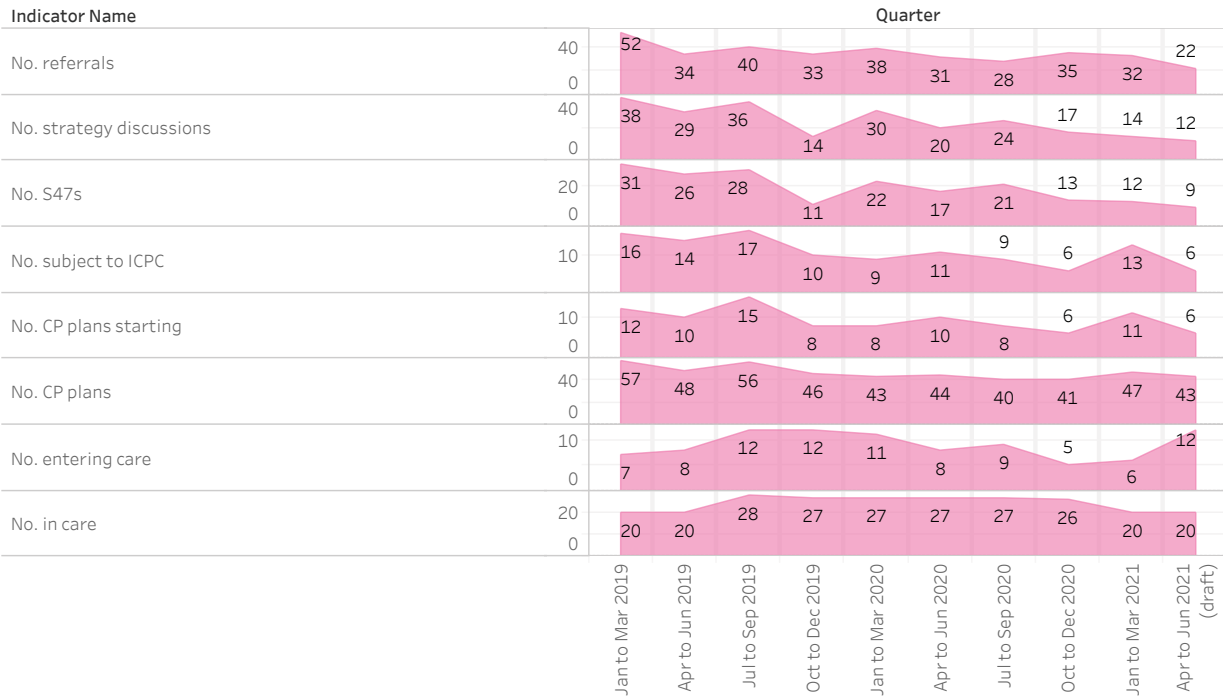


Priority 2

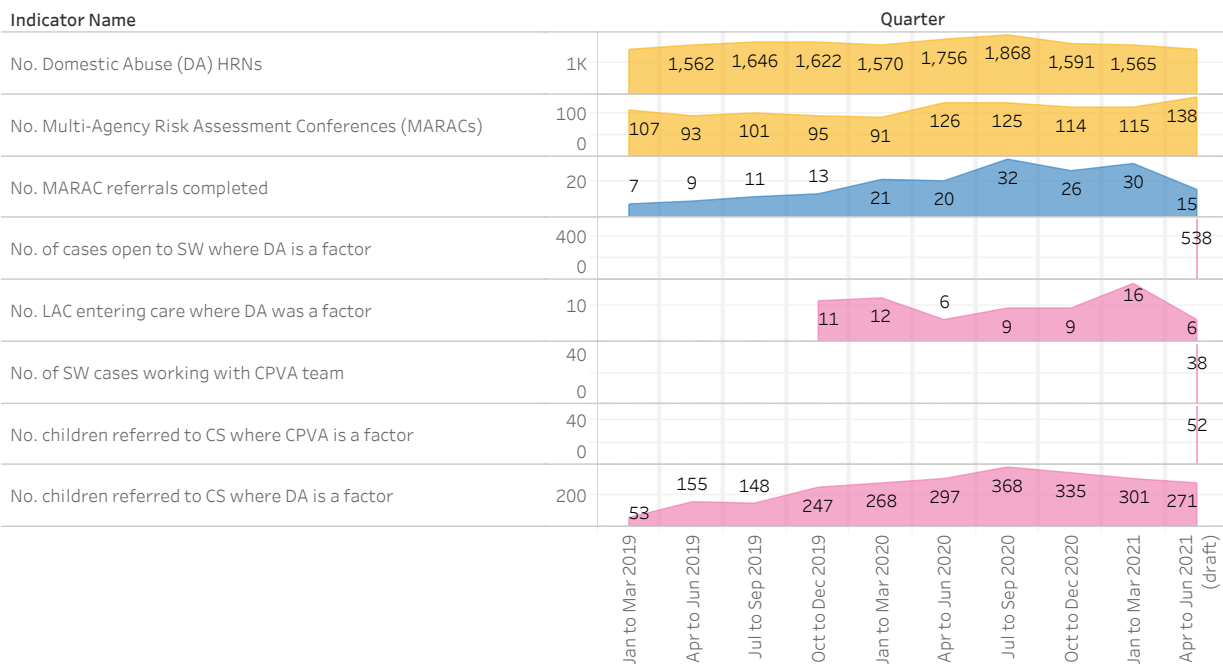


Priority 3 All data relates to children under 1 year old

Data from: CCG - CNTW - NCC CS - NHCFT - Police



Priority 4



6. Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice

6.1 What has worked well

In developing the Northumberland Children and Young People's Plan, young people told us that one of the most important things to them was to have safe places to go in their own communities. The restrictions created by the pandemic have not made that easy for young people; however, virtual youth clubs have engaged with them across the county in issue-based youth sessions as well as arts and craft activities within their own homes. Detached youth work has safely facilitated outside youth work with individual young people and small groups in line with current regulations enabling young people to gain access to sexual health advice and support as well as discussing and engaging in issues and topics directly related to them.

This approach has meant that on over 200 occasions, young people have had meaningful engagements where they have expressed their thoughts and feelings to an appropriate adult, and received support in return. When asked what this meant, one young person said *"It was good to be able to talk to the youth workers that were doing detached as I have found lockdown really hard and am feeling lonely, I really appreciated having a catch up with them and talking about a few things that have been on my mind. They said they will support me either when they are doing detached or I can call them if I need to talk in between"*.

Listening to children and young people is crucial, at times the most vulnerable young people don't always feel that they are heard or their opinions taken seriously. Over the past year over 80 children and young people have

been supported to get their points of view across to the people they want to listen through the support of the Advocacy Team. In a recent Initial Child Protection Conference, a young person was supported to attend and take part, enabling them to give their side of the story. The conference chair commented that this was one of the most positive and productive conferences they have chaired in years. The young person left knowing that everyone understood their feelings and that they were now getting the help they needed.

Signs of Safety practice has focused direct work with young people. Safety plans are now completed with young people, so they are aware of triggers and red flags around risk taking behaviour. This means that risk assessment is more contextual in its approach to working with teenagers and helps them understand strategies to reduce risk themselves as well as following safeguarding measures from external risks.

Within Northumberland Adolescent Services young people are regularly asked to feedback on the service they have received. Young people open to the 14+ Team are asked "Do you think your social worker has made you: Safer, Happier, Less Worried. 100% of the young people said that they thought their social worker made them safer and happier and 67% said that their social worker made them less worried. One of those young people also commented *"The best way social services has helped me is by giving me [a] life my parents couldn't"*.

As referred to in the priorities section, an Appreciative Inquiry methodology is being used to engage with young people who have experienced the care system to develop an audit tool in order to interrogate the significant challenges that undermine agencies efforts to meet their needs.

As part of Disability Awareness Day, December 2020, the partnership worked with young people from Collingwood Special Needs school to focus on positive representations of disability and a u-tube video outlines [what young people said made them feel safe](#).

6.2 Participation by children and young people with the Independent Reviewing Service

The participation of C&YP in their Children Looked After (CLA) reviews was strong with 95% taking part and/or contributing directly to their reviews. The method of participation varied from an update prior to the review to young people chairing their own reviews. Where possible, reviews were held with the agreement of the young people, with the focus on them and their plan.⁴

The IRO service have responded to the challenges of the pandemic, putting in place virtual mechanisms to ensure statutory requirements and timescales were met. It is reported that virtual meetings enhanced the level and breadth of professional participation.

Plans are in place for the Participation Team to team up with the IROs to deliver training to the ASYE academy around engaging and involving young people in conferences and reviews.

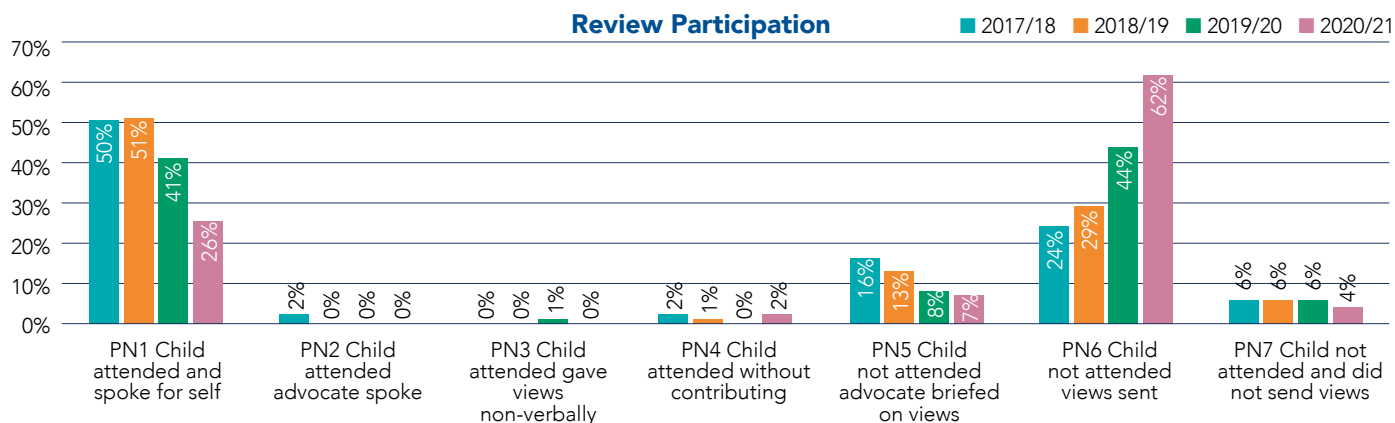


Figure 2. Breakdown of children and young people's participation in looked after reviews

6.3 Challenges

There is evidence that front-line staff have made considerable efforts to engage directly with children and young people during the unavoidable restrictions imposed by the pandemic. However, there is the potential for the voice of children and young people, and particularly those with disabilities, to be marginalised through virtual contact. It is less easy to ensure a confidential space for them to speak to professionals and some do not like communicating through virtual means. For younger children, face to face observation is essential for assessing their

behaviour, communication and welfare. Reduced face to face assessment and visits has inevitably meant some delay in undertaking/ completing assessments and reviews for C&YP with additional support needs; however, recovery plans have been put in place. The Disabled C&YP sub-group has proactively reviewed the approaches taken by different agencies to rate caseloads on the basis of risk and target face to face time with DC&YP throughout the pandemic.

⁴ Source. Independent Reviewing Officer Service Annual Report 2020/2021

7. Workforce development and improvement

The pandemic has impacted on delivery of the training programme which has been adapted to online/virtual delivery. This has kept a good range of training available and added new e-learning modules to support staff working from home.

1. The impact of the pandemic within other areas of training provision has been embedded, for example within Domestic Abuse training.
2. Continuing expansion of the wider workforce Early Help and Prevention multi-agency training programme.
3. Two new multi-agency training strategies;
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences - establishing foundations for resilience focused, trauma-informed practice
 - Domestic Abuse - building on victim/survivor training by focusing on strengthening professional skills and knowledge to undertake direct work with perpetrators of domestic abuse

Work has been undertaken this year to evaluate the impact of training on frontline practice;

Sexual Exploitation

In 2019, an agreement was reached between the SAB and NSSP that there should be a combined, joined-up offer of Sexual Exploitation training open to both the adult and children's multi-agency workforce. As a result, since early 2020, we now offer **Vulnerability Not Age: Exploring Sexual Exploitation**.

As a consequence of this strengthened offer, the impact the training was having on the work of the practitioners in Northumberland was explored, in particular, how the exploitation training was impacting upon practice and outcomes for children and families ([page 31](#)).

Criminal Exploitation

The criminal exploitation (CE) training offer consisted of an e-learning package, criminal exploitation awareness sessions, which were face-to-face and some County Lines briefings.

The post evaluation work focussed on the face-to-face training offer, which was a commissioned training package provided by EDGE.

This work was collated in July 2020 and looked at the impact that attending CE training has had on their practice and particularly the impact upon the children and families that they support, which is the conclusive measure of the impact of training ([page 32](#)).

Vulnerability not age; Exploring sexual exploitation

As a result of attending a Sexual Exploitation Learning Event, staff were asked 3 months later; 'how has this training impacted upon your social care practice and for the outcomes of the children and families you are working with....'

What was said about the impact upon practice...

I challenged aspects of a resource a colleague was using, which focused entirely on a male perspective and used discriminatory and stigmatising concepts of women and girls and consent in relationships.

I now clearly understand how and when to complete a referral form for an MSET.

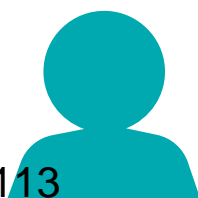
I identified the need for a professionals meeting to share concerns to ensure all parties involved had current, timely details of issues and concerns to ensure a robust safety plan and risk assessment was achieved for the young person.

What was said about the impact upon outcomes for children and families...

I have recently been working with two older victims of exploitation, which as a result of the training, I was able to identify additional vulnerability needs, and linked in relevant social care providers ensuring a care plan was in place and reviewed to meet the needs of the clients.

Having the knowledge from the training, has really helped us to develop the learning materials. I am working with a Mum at the moment. Since this training I have realised just how vulnerable she is, and that despite her young age at the moment she may need continued support throughout her journey as a mother. This training changed the way I look at the situation and how I work with the family.

We are in the process of starting to develop an exploitation awareness programme to run with young people in schools in Northumberland to help young people identify the issues.



Exploring Criminal Exploitation

'As a result of attending a criminal Exploitation Learning Event, staff were asked 3 months later, how did this training impact upon their practice and for the outcomes of children and young families they are working with...'

What was said about the impact upon practice...

I have a better understanding of the local context of county lines and how this operates within Northumberland. It has expanded my knowledge in terms of how deep young people can become involved in this and the impact that it can have on them and their families which may prevent them from seeking help. I now know how to spot the signs, and the terminology used by young people which will help me to recognise when young people may be involved in exploitation."

I can now consider the nature and prevalence of what County Lines means, including signs and indicators. I have a much better and clearer understanding of CCE and the key things to look out for. I know what this looks like for children and young people. This has now allowed me to consider how best to work with young people that may be involved in these really difficult and dangerous situations.

What was said about the impact upon outcomes for children and families...

One very powerful quote has been used to highlight the impact that this training has had upon an outcome for a young person...

I was able to have a discussion with the facilitator during the break, about my concerns for a young person that I was working with at the time and around the support that could potentially be offered to him.

In being able to network in this way I was sent a referral form the very next day. She then emailed me to follow this up, the very next day, as she had delivered training to the Police that morning who had also discussed making a referral for this particular young person. She was able to update them in terms of our discussion and this helped to strengthen my concerns. A worker was identified immediately following the completed referral being sent off.

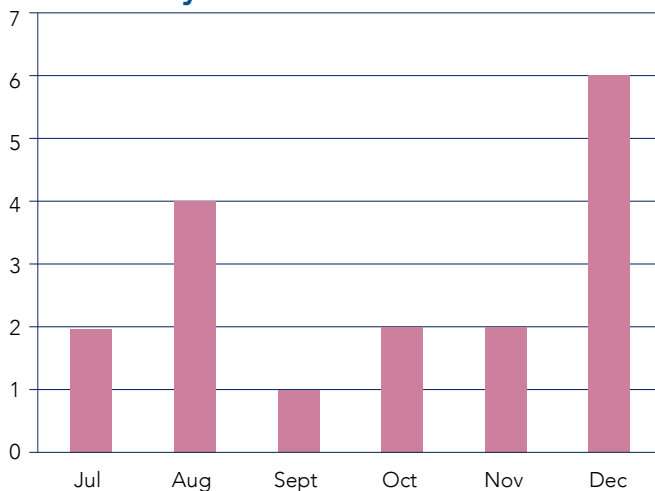
Being able to network in this way has proved hugely beneficial to this particular young person, myself and his support worker. I was confident he would receive the help and support that he so desperately needed. He formed a very good working relationship with the support worker who then went on to support him in his chosen career path and he veered away from the circle of associates that were of concern. Overall, this training event and the networking that it allowed may well have changed this young person's life!



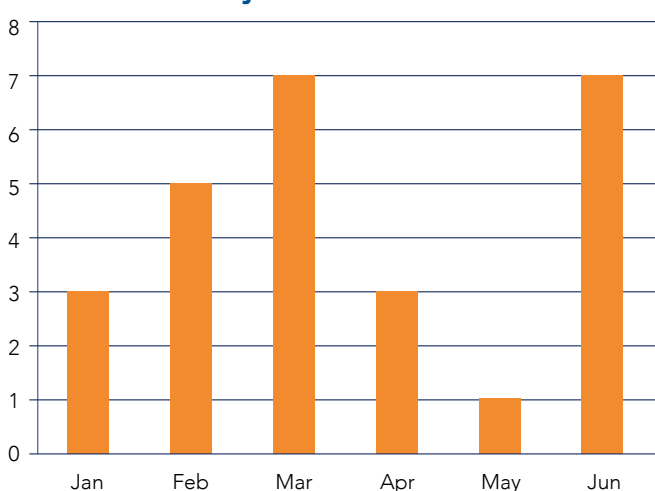
8. A review of the use of restraint in Kyloe House Secure Children's Home

There were 17 instances of physical intervention during the first 6 month period and 26 instances of physical intervention during the second 6 month period. The charts detail the number of physical interventions per month;

**Use of Physical Intervention
1st July 2020 to 31 December 2020**



**Use of Physical Intervention
1st January 2021 to 30 June 2021**



The use of physical intervention within secure accommodation is impacted on by a number of factors, including when the young person is first admitted, their presenting needs, relationships with the new staff team and the pressures of a secure environment. This complex behaviour requires the care team to work extensively with the health team to develop appropriate behaviour management and health plans to support the young people to develop more appropriate and less reactive strategies to deal with their emotional difficulties.

This dynamic is evidenced within the two charts.

There will always be peaks and troughs dependent upon the stages of the group of young people and how confident they are in regulating their emotions without the need, for example, to self-harm or be violent towards others. Another factor to consider is as young people prepare to leave secure accommodation this can often lead to an increase in the frequency of use of physical intervention. The figures at the end of both reporting periods reflect this.

It is difficult to compare and contrast the use of physical intervention from previous years due to the impact of COVID-19 restricting the number of young people living in the home.

9. Independent scrutineer's conclusions

This report demonstrates that over the last year the NSSP has met its statutory duties and agencies have delivered safe and effective frontline services that endeavour to safeguard children and young people in the face of the many challenges and risks the pandemic has presented.

9.1 Does the NSSP add value to safeguarding in Northumberland?

Major challenges continue for the NSSP that are exacerbated by the pandemic. We know there is an association between a family's socio-economic circumstances and the likelihood of a child experiencing abuse or neglect, we also know that this is a gradient relationship and not a straightforward divide. The impact of hardship on parental capacity is complex and persistent, sometimes at an individual level through mental health, or illness, but also through invisible barriers creating difficulty in asking for earliest support.

Families experiencing poverty are often not resourced to invest in themselves, their home environment, things they need, or quality care and activity. Too often the social and physical environments are unchangeable by families themselves yet are stubborn barriers to living well and staying safe. Children experience neglect, and children experience happy and safe childhoods across the socio-economic spectrum, so it is vital partners understand this, recognising the role stigma and shame play in preventing families from accessing support must be central to the design of any activities or interventions agencies put in place to mitigate. Too many interventions are activity focused; confronting the socio-economic difficulties that families face is key to relieving pressure and opening families up to opportunity. Evidence shows that relieving the emotional and financial burden of the extended holidays, building support networks and establishing hobbies with peer groups is a key safety net for families and a fundamental aspect of social mobility. We need to make best use of partners relationships

to work with families, understanding the challenges they face and the opportunities they would like to see and be part of.

The question of whether value is added by the partnership to that of individual agencies safeguarding systems, is crucial to evaluating the impact of the NSSP. There is evidence of the NSSP facilitating joined-up working on the frontline through, for example, an integrated Children and Adult MASH which works well; this model has been welcomed by partners. Joint adult/children Learning Reviews and action plans with joint 7-minute guides have been developed as appropriate. Progress has been made with the collation and analysis of multi-agency data, with a particular focus on NSSP priorities. This has enabled the partnership to understand their current position, measure progress and outcomes, and plan practice improvements.

There is a culture of positive relationships and effective multi-agency working in Northumberland; partners are sufficiently confident to constructively challenge each other at a senior level. The new arrangements are beginning to promote change, for example in joint funding commitments and joined-up senior decision-making. Over the coming year, Northumberland's vision is to develop ever closer strategic alignment between the NSSP, Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of criminal and sexual exploitation was undertaken in 2019 and tangible, measurable progress

continues to be reported to the NSSP bi-monthly. Over this period, multi-agency responses to children and young people at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, and all aspects of Modern Slavery have been strengthened through a joint CE strategy and delivery plan. Delivery of missing, slavery, exploitation, and trafficking (MSET) roadshows to educate and support front line safeguarding staff have increased understanding of signs of exploitation and enabled appropriate referrals. Police have launched an Early Intervention Strategy and delivery plan and are planning a Vulnerability Awareness training programme to all front-line practitioners with a focus on Early Intervention and use of the three C's (Curiosity, Communication and Clues). Police will view incidents through the eyes of the child, ensuring officers focus on underlying issues and explore Mental Health triage and interventions rather than a singular Criminal Justice approach.

A Transition Protocol has been endorsed although further work is needed to monitor transition outcomes based on feedback from the young people themselves. Work includes a focus on safe transitions for disabled young people where there are safeguarding concerns.

The NSSP DC&YP sub group has published guidance on recognising and responding to safeguarding concerns about DC&YP and are currently undertaking a repeat multi-agency audit examining themes that include contextual safeguarding and how effective are the assessments of factors affecting a disabled child such as neglect and the impact of the pandemic.

Going forward, there are plans to further integrate the public health commissioned 0-19 Service (health visiting and school nursing) with Early Help.

The analysis within this report supports the proposition that the NSSP is a learning partnership underpinned by a positive culture of agencies working effectively together. However more work is needed to strengthen the governance of the strategic safeguarding arrangements going forward. Priorities have been agreed, and risks identified, nonetheless the strategic vision, long term objectives and goals need further development by the three safeguarding partners.

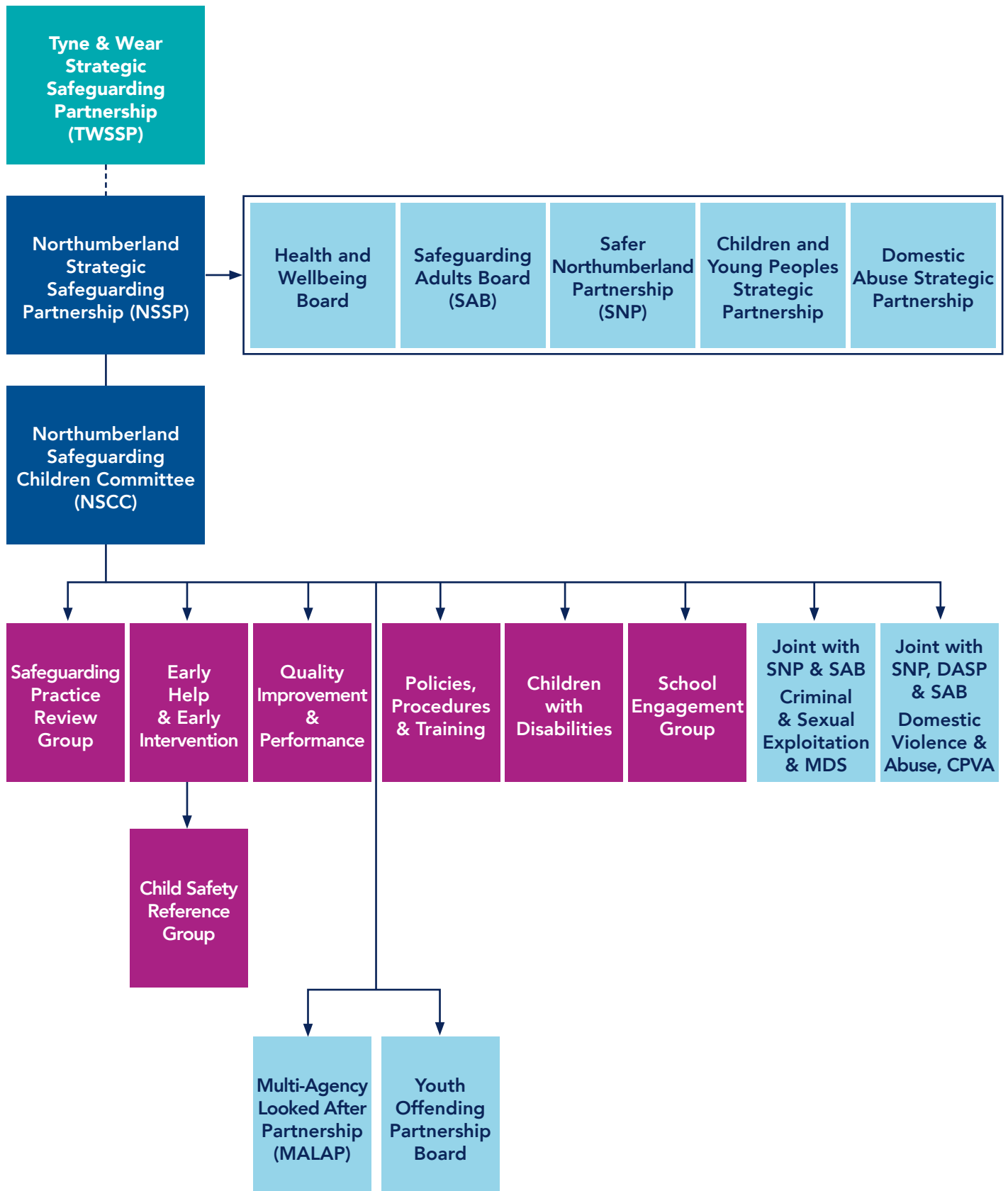
Meaningfully involving children and young people and gaining their views about the quality of multi-agency practice is challenging although there is evidence of progress, particularly in day-to-day practice. However, the partnership needs to understand and apply children and young peoples 'lived experience' at a strategic level. In other words, drilling down into personal knowledge about their world gained through their direct experience, rather than representations constructed by the NSSP. This is an ambitious but significant test for the safeguarding partners.

Emerging risks are recognised but further work is needed by the NSSP regarding contextual safeguarding. Sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviours in school is one strand of this work, however the challenge is to address peer on peer sexual abuse more widely in community settings.

A challenging question for safeguarding partnerships, is how to develop a local understanding of what it is they do that works, and importantly, what doesn't work. Further evidence is needed to understand the extent to which agencies interventions are connected to children and young people's outcomes. For example, does the positive and welcome support, provided through Operation Encompass; Next Steps, translate into improved resilience, health and educational outcomes for children and young people. We need to answer these sort of questions.

Appendix 1

Governance Structure



Appendix 2

NSSP Membership

Members

Independent Scrutiny and Assurance Chair

Northumberland County Council

Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Service Director, Education and Skills

Service Director, Children's Social Care

Head of Housing and Public Protection

Director of Public Health

Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group

Executive Director of Nursing, Quality & Patient Safety

Chief Operating Officer

Northumbria Police

Detective Chief Inspector Safeguarding

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Healthcare Professionals

Professional & Operational Lead Safeguarding Adults & Children

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Group Nurse Director North Locality Care Group

Named Nurse for Adult and Children Safeguarding

Probation Services

Head of North of Tyne

Senior Operational Support Manager North of Tyne

CAFCASS

Service Manager

Advisors to the NSSP

NSSP Business Manager

Strategic Safeguarding Manager, Safeguarding Adults Board

Designated Doctor

Designated Nurse

Senior Manager Performance: Education & Safeguarding

Sub-Committee chairs as required

Appendix 3

NSSP Staffing and Budget

Staffing

Expenditure	2020-2021
NSSP Manager	£ 67,342
Business Support Officer	£27,530
Training (% of training manager salary)	£36,781
Total staffing costs	£131,653
Insurance - Employers Liability / Third Party	£70
Hire of facilities	£0
Professional Services, Tri.x procedures, Independent Chair and SCR Authors	£23,878
Travel Allowances	£457
Other	£275
Total Expenditure	£156,333

The NSSP is supported by the following officers:

NSSP Business Manager

NSSP Business Support

NSSP Budget

The financial contributions from partner agencies are as follows:

Partner	2020-2021
Northumbria Police	£5,000
NHS Northumberland CCG	£70,000
Northumberland County Council	£75,579
CCG (contribution to SLP)	£2877
Police (contribution to SLP)	£2877
Total Contributions	£156,333



Appendix 4

Northumberland;

Context & Information

- Population: **322,434**
- Child Population: **59,050**
- Clinical Commissioning Group: **1**
- Police Force: **1**
- CRC/NPS: **1**
- GP Practices: **38**
- Foundation Trust (Acute and Community): **1**
- Mental Health Trust: **1**
- Ambulance Trust: **1**
- Schools: **164** (**49** Academies including **1** Free School Academy);
 - First and Primary: **121** (**27** Academies including **1** Free School Academy)
 - Middle: **17** (**8** Academies)
 - High School: **16** (**12** Academies, plus **1** all age)
 - Special School: **9** (**2** Academies)
 - PRU: **1**
- Northumberland is twice the size of Luxembourg, but has half the population size
- **97%** of the county is classed as rural
- **50%** of the population live in 3% of the south-east urban area
- Population density of **64** people per square kilometre; **427** nationally
- Northumberland is the **116th** most deprived area (out of 317)
- **45,550** pupils attending schools – **19.6%** FSM, **98.0%** have English as first language
- **3.9%** of pupils with an EHCP, **11.5%** with SEN support
- **73%** of under 2s in targeted areas are engaged with a Children’s Centre
- **660** Early Help Plans
- **836** Child in Need Plans
- **337** CP Plans
- **436** Looked After Children
- **58,801** 0–17-year-olds. The number continues to decline, at the same time there is an increasing elderly population in the county

Contact Us

Northumberland County Council,
County Hall,
Morpeth
NE61 2EF



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3RD FEBRUARY 2022

Annual Report for Learning and Skills Service 2020/21

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

Cabinet Member: Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson, Lead Member Children's Services

Purpose of report

The annual report for Learning and Skills Service is provided to highlight the performance during the academic year 2020/21; present the work of the Careers Guidance Team and provides an understanding of the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service. The Learning and Skills Service contains a number of specialist skills and support areas and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as training in the workplace.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- Consider and review the content of the annual report.
- Endorse the approach developing the Northumberland curriculum models to enhance the learning experience and support our students to acquire the skills and knowledge to be successful in life.
- Recognise the performance given the continuing challenges of the global pandemic against operating circumstances and the valuable support provided to all learners within the:
 - Learning and Skills Service
 - Careers Guidance Team
 - Employability and Skills Service
- Review the improvement actions set out in the 2019/20 report (impact in bold)
 - Skills strategy which meets Northumberland and North of Tyne - **developed and approved by cabinet**
 - More young people (16-18) access the right programme and support to be able to achieve well with good opportunities for employment - **retention for young people improved in 2020/21 and the achievement rate increased by 10 percentage points**

- More adult learners enrol to improve their chances to gain employment through a curriculum offer which supports this approach- **destinations in 2020/21 improved significantly with more students than ever progressing to the next level of training and to employment**
- A coherent approach working with businesses, building relationships which benefit industry, skills, schools and our residents (**Introduction of Global Bridge digital platform linking schools and industry, Curriculum research with sector specific career links, employer led partnership development e.g., Port of Blyth welding, integration of planning and skills via section 106 agreement**)

Agree the identified areas for improvement and the routines established to monitor progress

- Strengthen curriculum models and the pastoral model to support better retention and achievement in Northumberland Skills
- Continue the transformation to a dynamic and flexible demand led service
- Continue to focus on the Apprenticeship model for Northumberland to meet the needs of more services and businesses
- Synchronise employability programmes and create a progression model to support sustainable employment with skills training
- Underpin the Preparation for Adulthood agenda in two ways; undertake all statutory EHCP reviews with year 9 pupils to plan career pathways; develop routes and partnerships to have a sustainable training and employment route for young people with EHCP and SEN support, including internally within NCC.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is in strong accordance with the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- We want you to have access to the things you need; ‘connecting’
- We want you to achieve and realise your potential; ‘learning’
- We want you to attract more and better jobs; ‘thriving’

In addition, the report is directly linked to the Education and Skills priorities

Priority 1- We will take a key role in the strategic leadership of educational improvement in Education and Skills in Northumberland. Our vision will define the purpose and will ensure connectivity and inclusion to eradicate gaps.

Priority 4- We will develop an alternative education model which offers routes for children which support their future career choice; the model may also support keeping our children in education and provide a positive and financially viable contribution to our communities.

Priority 10- We will develop key relationships with education and industry to support careers ambition, curriculum development and routes into post 16 and Higher Education which support the economic priorities in Northumberland.

Priority 11- We will develop a strategy and create an appropriate curriculum supporting the needs of all our young people and adults in Northumberland so that more can access

suitable/appropriate/good fit apprenticeships, skills training and development to underpin careers, employment and in work progression.

Priority 12- We will work closely with Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council and North of Tyne Combined Authority to be innovative in our approaches and to be groundbreaking and leading the way in education for all our stakeholders.

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The annual self-assessment review grades the Learning and Skills service as GOOD with some areas that require improvement. Areas where performance could be better will form part of quality improvement planning for routine monitoring as well as the areas where the focus and emphasis need to continue the changes to meet strategic and economic priorities.
- 1.2 The impact of lockdown has meant reduced recruitment in adult learning whilst residents chose to stay safe and not join classrooms on site. The development of a virtual offer is good but needs more promotion and development to not only continue to increase the uptake but to also reach into areas of the county to support greater engagement with learning, ultimately supporting progression to higher levels of study and employment.
- 1.3 The work to transform the service into a responsive and dynamic offer meeting the needs of residents and businesses continues, supporting more and more young people and adults. The service in particular is able to support young people and adults with a strong pastoral and personalised curriculum model to meet their needs and to work with them to ensure the starting point, the pathway, and the journey led to successful outcomes including employment.
- 1.4 Working with our young people to identify much earlier in their progression discussions their potential career pathways so that they feel safe and secure and feel that they can be ambitious and succeed is a core principle embedded within the Education and Skills priorities. In particular this work will have a strong focus for our young people who have Education Health Care Plans as the service develops plans and pathways to improve the routes to sustainable employment.

2. Background

2.1 Learning and Skills Service

2.1.1 2020-21 was another year of disruption and change and a very untypical academic year for education, skills and training. The Learning and Skills service self-assessment grades the service as GOOD, in terms of Ofsted gradings for 2020/21. The last inspection was based upon the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and graded the service as GOOD in July 2018. The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) was implemented September 2019 and has a change in priorities and areas of focus which determine the overall grade. The work continues to develop the service, now Northumberland Skills, to provide excellence in training and a values-based

education model and student experience as a platform to further study and employment.

2.1.2 Adult Learning for those aged over 19 forms the largest majority of the service and remains as a GOOD performance with an achievement rate of 84%, just below the National Average. Given the challenges to ensure learners remained on programme, engaged and making good progress throughout the pandemic this achievement rate is reassuring. English and maths programmes this year were impacted particularly by retention (i.e., student leavers) Programmes commenced across the year and when tracking the learners, it can be seen that leavers coincide with increased school restrictions and lockdown where parents and carers adjusted their focus to home learning. The achievement rate excluding English and mathematics is 93%. Achievement rates for learners with EHCP is outstanding at 100% (learning continued on site throughout lockdown/ restrictions).

2.1.3 There were 1027 enrolments onto programmes across eight campuses in 2020/21 for adult learners and 38 enrolments for young people aged 16-18 with the largest majority (96.3%) of enrolments being adult learning. It is important to note that there is no publication of performance rates nationally and these cannot be compared to any previous year performance.

2.1.4 The range of courses included Diplomas in Early Years Practitioner, Supported Teaching & Learning and Childcare. Diplomas in Bricklaying; Painting and Decorating and Construction Skills. Diplomas in Hair & Beauty and Catering. Bespoke SEND, Pre-Vocational, Skills for Independence and Work and Personal and Social Development as well as English and mathematics, languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Business and customer services, management training and digital skills have also expanded in 2020/21.

2.1.5 Staff and learners continue to demonstrate tremendous resilience working in covid safe environments, managing household absences from work and school and continuing to learn new skills. The further investment of digital devices in 2020/21 has supported a more continuous learning journey and the learner's ability to adapt to online is improved from the sudden change in 2019/20.

2.1.6. Apprenticeship recruitment in line with classroom-based learning also decreased significantly. Apprenticeship performance rates overall have reduced with some Apprentices leaving their roles, many owing to Covid related issues. The 19-24 age group (the largest cohort) however performed well above their peer Apprentices. The introduction of a new Apprenticeship manager has focused the work of the model of delivery to help more Apprentices successfully complete and achieve but more importantly to focus on a pastoral element of support in the workplace. Apprentices - Positive learner feedback about blended delivery received along with the appropriate level of challenge and support which has resulted in minimal delays with end point assessment (EPA) A good higher-level achievement at EPA for apprentices - as an example of the Apprentices working towards IC Qualifications EPA their results for 2020/21 were more than good with 84% of apprentices who completed their EPA achieving a higher-level result.

Use of Padlet to gather Learner comments and views throughout the year 20/21 to ensure that learners felt listened to and responses made appropriately https://padlet.com/Northumberland_Skills/Learner_Voice

2.1.7 in 2020/21 a new curriculum model including 6 weekly reviews was introduced to support learners progress on course much more clearly for all learners undertaking classroom and workshop-based programmes, this incremental review approach underpinning achievement rate improvements.

2.1.5 Internal progression is Good for learners, more than 94% progress and complete another programme after their first engagement but still not enough learners secure an Apprenticeship. As an example of the 127 adult learners undertaking Health and Care qualifications - 97 progressed into employment.

2.1.6 The curriculum extends learning beyond the vocational elements of the course, providing the opportunity for learners to development personal, social and employability skills. Lerner feedback is very strong in this aspect.

2.1.7 Development of Study Skills across the Service is Good. This has been a key focus in 2020/21 with a new pastoral lead, leading to learners feeling well supported in readiness to progress to the next phase of education and/or employment.

2.1.8 Virtual learning continued to be adapted and developed quickly by both staff and learners alike. This has been embedded into normal expectations during the continued Pandemic period. The case studies developed reflect the learning which has accelerated for those who embraced the need to continue their studies virtually as well as highlighting the need for a blended approach for some of our most vulnerable learners where a face-to-face interaction in a secure environment is so important.

2.1.9 Learner's attitudes to their education are positive and have been shown to have improved over time. Behaviour and attitudes of learners is good, with learners demonstrating effective behaviours for learning supporting what we know to be the expectations of employers.

2.1.10 Tutorial and Skills development sessions are effective and enable learners to develop their character including their confidence, resilience and subject specific knowledge, for those learners who are our most vulnerable greater engagement and contact will be modelled moving forward.

2.1.11 Learners receive good links to industry throughout all curriculum areas, leading to the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours required to progress into high-quality destinations. The links are provided by staff and with business engagement being strengthened this year but with a recognition that even more engagement will benefit more of the study programme development.

2.1.12 Career's advisers work with a range of external agencies to effectively source provision from a range of providers. The Careers Guidance team performs the Council's statutory duties to encourage, enable and assist young people over statutory school age but under 19 (or 25 with an EHCP) to participate in education and training. The team is also responsible for the statutory duty to track record report and support Northumberland residents in this cohort in relation to their post 16 education and training.

2.1.13 Effective teaching and course management enables learners to complete qualifications, providing progress into a positive destination. Where this works well the curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards development of knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.

2.1.14 The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. Comprehensive log of any safeguarding issues is maintained. Learners are confident they know how to

report and feel safe. The service continues to develop staff and learners with an emphasis on remaining safe from extremism.

2.1.15 Learners excel in an environment in which they feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination.

2.1.16 Attendance remained strong across all curriculum areas whilst engagement posed some challenges during lockdown. Engagement was closely monitored throughout lockdown and all campuses were well managed to be covid safe learning environments.

2.1.17 During academic year 2020-21 Northumberland County Council had Apprenticeship sub-contract arrangements in place with Newcastle City Learning and North Tyneside Council. Achievement rates across all aims and levels are at 83%, significantly greater than national rate. Timely completion rate is 90%, 3 learner completions exceeding 3 months past their end date but with a variety of pandemic based complexities affecting these learners. The success on these programmes is in part underpinned by the development of a comprehensive sub-contracting provider monitoring framework for 2020-21. The framework gathering evidence via monthly sub-contractor meetings with detailed and robust minutes taken, actions recorded, and interventions being implemented on an evidence-based approach in a timely manner. Sharing of learner tracking systems and data has become transparent, in some cases with NCC having direct access to online learner progress tracking platforms for NCC sub-contracted learners, again supporting timely and evidence-based actions to support achievement rates in 2020-21.

2.1.18 Learner behaviour is Good across the Service due to consistent expectations and challenge across the curriculum team. Consistent high expectations have supported the achievement outcomes across the whole service to all learners.

2.1.19 Learners confirm that they enjoy their programmes at Northumberland Skills. Learners are regularly encouraged to feedback on the programmes via [Learner Voice](#) leading to suggestions for improvement and subsequent actions. Digital approaches and forums have been employed to support more routine and formative feedback ongoing.

'I realise this lesson is really important and will help me with my career path. I've used my CV to apply for three jobs already.' Shaun Ingleton

'Enrichment is going really good because it is my favourite thing to do with the teacher and my friends...I enjoy engaging in the sessions and the work we discuss.' Nicole Telford

2.2. Careers Guidance Team (CGT)

2.2.1 Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to track, report on and support young people into education employment or training. NCC's Careers Guidance Team (CGT) is responsible for the discharge of these duties.

2.2.2 Local authorities collect information to identify young people who are not participating in education employment or training (NEET), or who are at risk of not doing so, and to target their resources on those who need them most. The information collected must be in the format specified in the Client Caseload Information System

(CCIS) Management Information Requirement document. This standalone system, which has a national interface with DfE, is operated and managed by the CGT.

2.2.3 Through the team's work with school's colleges and providers, arrangements are in place to confirm young people's current activity at regular intervals through exchange of information with education and training providers and other services as well as direct contact with young people. The CGT works with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not being NEET and these young people can be referred for intensive support from the CGT and other services.

2.2.4 The CGT supports enables and assists young people aged 13-19 and those aged 20-25 with an EHCP to participate in education employment or training. Regular tracking of young people's participation successfully is a key element of this duty.

2.2.5 The CGT leads the September Guarantee process, which underpins the delivery of these duties. This is the process by which local authorities aim to ensure that all 16–17-year-olds receive an offer of a suitable place in education or training by the end of September each year. Information is recorded and reported on the number and proportion of young people in each area who:

- receive an offer under the September Guarantee.
- are participating in education or training.
- who are NEET, or
- whose current activity is not known.

2.2.6 Data is taken from the CCIS data reported to DfE and made available publicly via the DfE website on a regular basis. The team reports on a number of key data collections throughout the academic year. The first of these in the 20/21 academic year is the September Guarantee.

2.2.7 September Guarantee 2021 - The overall figure is 96.8%, a slight increase on the previous year (2020 figure was 96.6%). Northumberland remains above the national average of 95.5% and the regional average of 95.7%. Regionally Northumberland has the second highest 2021 September Guarantee figure behind Hartlepool (97.0%)

September Guarantee table

	16 and 17 year olds	Offer made (%).	Is the proportio n of 16/17- year-olds receiving an offer higher than in 2020?	Offer not appropriat e (%)	No offer (%)	Not recorded (%)
ENGLAND	1,195,380	95.5%	Yes	1.1%	0.9%	2.6%
NORTH EAST	56,280	95.7%	Yes	1.2%	0.9%	2.1%
Northumberland	6,480	96.8%	Yes	1.5%	0.8%	0.8%

2.2.8 The CGT collects the required monthly data from schools, alternative providers and staff also telephone individuals in order to satisfy DfE reporting requirements. This has proved more challenging since the beginning of the covid pandemic as staff have been unable to work face to face in schools and with young people.

2.2.9 The CGT delivers a robust data set whereby the number of young people whose current activities in relation to education and training are unknown is low. In September every 16–18-year-old is made 'not known' in the system and the team must then find and record and track their destination.

2.2.10 In November 2021 (the latest figure available) there were 197 young people (3.1% of the cohort) whose current destination was not known. The CGT continue to work with all young people to improve their knowledge around the opportunities available to them.

2.2.11 The number of pupils with EHCPs in schools not receiving a full transition review is too erratic and therefore the service will have a greater focus on these pupils in 2021/22.

2.3 Learning and Skills Service Employability Team

2.3.1 The service continues to play a vital role throughout the challenges of 2021/22 academic year supporting residents through some really challenging personal phases of their lives, helping residents when any employment potentially feels very hard to achieve. The service has supported and engaged with residents throughout lockdown in new and different ways, developing new services to be responsive to residents who became unemployed or significantly at risk in their roles throughout the pandemic.

2.3.2 The service has continued to work throughout the pandemic and the service has grown in response to resident's needs. We have increased our offer of employment focussed programmes to respond directly to the expected high rise in unemployment. The team delivered 4 employment programmes – The DWP JETS Programme (job entry targeted support), DWP Restart Scheme and DWP Building Better Opportunities and the North of Tyne Combined Authority funded Triage programme, which commenced in June 2020 and ceased October 2021.

2.3.3 The DWP Jets Programme continued, delivered with Reed in Partnership, as a digital employment support programme to offer support throughout the pandemic remotely. Referrals are from Job Centres across Northumberland and participants are residents who are newly unemployed and have been impacted by the downturn in the labour market. Support is primarily digital, and 550 residents have started on the programme and 250 have moved into employment. Due to its success, the programme will continue until March 2023 to help residents who prefer digital engagement.

2.3.4 The service continues to deliver The DWP Work and Health Programme - delivered in partnership with Reed in Partnership. A voluntary programme targeted at those with physical and mental health issues. Support includes general employment support, employability and skills training along with health and wellbeing support i.e., mindfulness sessions and confidence support. 1091 residents have started on the programme since November 2017 and 368 have gone into employment. Whilst some participants felt too vulnerable throughout the pandemic to continue looking for work (due to health conditions), many have now reengaged and

gone into roles in newly emerging sectors i.e., facilities management, care, logistics and home working.

2.3.5 The DWP RESTART scheme went live in July 2021 and is supporting benefit claimants who have been unemployed for 12 months. The purpose of the programme is to help those impacted by the pandemic and those even further removed in the labour market, maximising employment, and reducing the impacts of rising long-term unemployment. The programme offers IAG and skills support including using Resilience, self-awareness and confidence, digital media skills, budget management, effective job search & CV support, transferable skills etc. The programme offers additional skills support for the over 50's and young people who have been further impacted by the pandemic. The Employability Service is working collaboratively with REED in Partnership to deliver the programme in Northumberland. To date 151 have started on programme and 20 have gone into employment.

2.3.6 The North of Tyne Combined Authority granted funding to create the employment support Triage Programme which commenced in June 2020 and ceased in October 2021. Staff acted as a single point of access for all online or phone queries through the NCC Covid Communities hub, supporting employment issues faced by individuals in need and working with JCPs and local support providers. Providing 'light touch' advice and guidance, direction to online resources, and if appropriate, referral to existing Council Employability and Skills programmes. 657 residents accessed the service and received support until the programme ceased.

2.3.7 North of Tyne Combined Authority funding provided digital devices to participants on employment programmes to engage in digital employment support and learning. As of November 2021, the employability team gave out 94 devices to participants and a further 55 devices were given to Refugees to enable them to continue their ESOL studies. An online learning platform called OFF2CLASS was also procured and used by the Refugees whilst in lockdown to further enhance learning. Learning is now back in campuses and beneficiaries continue to use digital devices to support their studies and further digital integration

2.3.8 The service continues to be well positioned to respond particularly to North of Tyne Inclusive Growth projects where the prime aims are to support residents into gaps, reduce inequality and disadvantage gaps and to support progression into employment as well as in work progression through training.

2.3.9 Working in tandem with the skills service provides a seamless referral point from engagement and initial training into more structured training supporting employment. To improve the progression from the non-North of Tyne funded programmes all of the residents who accessed the covid triage programme and DWP Employment programmes will be supported by the skills service.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Academic Year 2020/21 has been without doubt yet another challenging year for Learning and Skills. The resilience of learners, clients and staff has been tested throughout and the transfer between restriction changes and subsequent lockdowns has pressurised the service. The Skills team have supported learners who benefit most from greater support and pastoral care whilst at the same time preparing the learners for their next steps.

3.2 Young people, adults and apprentices have continued to adapt, some much better than others are able to thrive, with some learners 'surviving' their educational journey

alongside changing lifestyle patterns. The implementation of the new supporting pastoral approach definitely improved the resilience levels, however when parents and carers needed to resume duties at home with online learning with their children, their own learning focus disappeared.

3.3 Adult learners pursued their learning well, (the English and maths functional skills is the exception as an in year start programme and parents/ carers leaving to support children in home learning) The achievement rates are in line with previous years, but removal of English and mathematics achievements shows the performance to be outstanding and so confidence that the model is working when a return to classroom-based learning without disruption is high.

3.4 Apprentices did not perform at the same rate as the previous year. Recruitment of new apprentices was low and retention of existing apprentices impacted on the achievement rates in 2020/21. Northumberland Skills is not out of line with national performance with the challenges the sector has faced.

3.5 The service has undergone further significant change; realigning curriculum; developing curriculum that is responsive to the needs of business in the county; designing curriculum and courses that meet the needs of our residents and is well placed to continue the strengthening and change moving forward.

3.6 The Employability team continued to respond very well to a fast paced continuously changing environment, completing the work on the COVID triage model to support rapid redeployment into jobs with supported skills training for 657 residents across the year.

3.7 The work of the Careers Guidance Team helped to maintain a relative performance of NEET statistics given the real challenges faced with not being able to engage face to face with young people, some of the most hard to reach became very difficult to engage with and so to have a position which is strong North of Tyne is good. However, our focus for those pupils with EHCP must shift to securing a pathway much earlier and support the Preparation for Adulthood approach in Northumberland.

3.8 Staff continue to adapt very well, a weekly CPD routine was established in 2020/21 that supports all aspects of development for staff, not least digital development. The quality of education continues to be a key driver in the day-to-day operations. Personal development, behaviours and attitudes are strong, the bar has been raised even further to support ambition. The transformation of the services continues to make this a dynamic service that meets the needs of residents and businesses across Northumberland.

Implications

Policy	All NCC policies apply in relation to the operational Learning and Skills service.
Finance and value for money	ESFA grant funded service with Apprenticeship Levy funded provision from NCC Levy fund. Schools Service Level agreement for CEIAG work Adult Education Budget is funded via NTCA for adult focused curriculum. Sub-contracted apprenticeship provision is funded directly to NCC and paid at 85% to the sub-contractor monthly on a pre-agreed profile.
Legal	Annual contractual arrangement for all grant contracts
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	Review of staffing requirement in relation to the curriculum plan required to deliver the grant profiles
Property	Eight sites around the county including shared working spaces, corporate buildings and Skills sites.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) N/A X	n/a
Risk Assessment	All staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed. All sites are covid risk assessed and undertake reviews every week as well as spot checks on premises to ensure routines and expectations are being followed
Crime & Disorder	Engagement with employability and projects within employability aim to support reductions in crimes and disorder within the county
Customer Consideration	Service plans and systems are approached from the customer perspective. All learner facing approaches include the learner/customer journey to improve satisfaction.
Carbon reduction	The increase in digital and remote learning as well as digital meeting spaces as significantly reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2020/21.
Health and Wellbeing	Student and staff wellbeing is reviewed and monitored as a routine. In particular the wellbeing of staff throughout lockdown

	was carefully monitored and recorded to ensure support was provided.
Wards	All aspects of the service support all wards in Northumberland, the digital reach has now expanded this opportunity.

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Suzanne Dent
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

This report has been prepared on behalf of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services by Audrey Kingham, Director of Education and Skills, audrey.kingham@northumberland.gov.uk



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24

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

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

Purpose of report

This report is presented to outline the key issues, challenges in relation to placement sufficiency for children in care. The Northumberland's Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24 is presented for the Board's approval – see appendix A.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report and make any comments for inclusion in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report links to the Living priority of the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2022

Key issues

1. To ensure that NCC is meeting its sufficiency duties being delivered through the Northumberland's Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 24.
2. The report identifies areas where NCC has been doing well in its provision of placements and areas of challenge.
3. The review and development of the local sufficiency strategy needs to be seen in the context of national challenges and developments in the provision of placements for children looked after.
4. The strategy has been developed in line with guidance issued by the Local Government Association (LGA) to support consistency of approach and increase opportunities for national collation and sharing of data and information in this crucial area of service provision.

Background

Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24 sets out the Council's approach to meeting its responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care and care leavers. It sets out the overall approach to managing demand, focusing on the right solutions and ensures that we fulfil our sufficiency duties. The strategy identifies appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is looked after achieves their potential. To ensure this strategy is robust, we have drawn on a wide range of available data, including historical trend, comparator data, and current service data which gives us evidence of trends and needs around placement provision so we can develop the right resources.

As corporate parents, underpinned by our leadership pledge, we will strive to provide the best quality care and support to our children in care and care leavers that we can. We recognise the importance of safe and secure placements to ensure children in our care live happy, healthy lives and achieve the best possible outcomes that they can. This is provided through well supported placements that meet the child's needs. We will place our children in a family setting wherever we can, unless their needs are better met in residential or other care settings.

An update was provided to the Board on the 4th November 2021 that gave an overview of the current position within Northumberland in relation to placements for children in care.

Sufficiency Duty

The duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (Children in Care) is explicit in the Children Act 1989. These regulations require a strategy to be in place that describes how local authorities intend to provide sufficient care placements for its children in care. The introduction of Sufficiency Statutory Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations has provided further clarity on the implementation of section 22G of the Act.

The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for local authorities to work with key partners to be able to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.

Future Actions

This strategy sets out the overall approach to managing demand, focusing specifically on the right solutions. It identifies appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is looked after achieves their potential.

The sufficiency strategy shows how we have analysed our data, giving detailed actions and responses that we have already put in place and identifying those we need to develop further. We have identified future challenges and planned actions to respond to the needs

of our looked after population of children and young people and we will develop those into an action plan to support the implementation of this sufficiency strategy.

We have also identified the national challenges and developments to which we will need to respond as national actions are also required to improve placement sufficiency. This included the national independent review of Children's Social Care and the findings from the State of the Nation Foster Care Survey.

It remains the case that providing stable placements in a timely way for our children in care is crucial in ensuring we give them the best chance to make the most of their lives and the implementation of this strategy is a key element of this.

Conclusion

Updating the Sufficiency Strategy is a priority to ensure this reflects Northumberland's vision and priorities for children in our care. We have identified future challenges and planned actions to respond to the needs of our looked after population of children and young people and we will develop those into an action plan to support the implementation of this sufficiency strategy.

The sufficiency strategy should be seen alongside our continuous improvement plan and our corporate parenting strategy and action plan.

Implications

Policy	Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 24
Finance and value for money	Capital funds have been agreed corporately in relation to children homes new builds. Revenue for staffing the new builds has been proposed through an invest to save proposal. All budgets are closely monitored to ensure value for money regarding the placements and provision it provides.
Legal	Statutory responsibility as corporate parents
Procurement	
Human Resources	HR implications for staffing new residential units
Property	
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	This report is part of the Risk Management systems in place to check on the standards and service provision for looked after children and care leavers
Crime & Disorder	
Customer Consideration	
Carbon reduction	
Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the health and wellbeing of our children in care and care leavers
Wards	All

Report sign off

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

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Northumberland
County Council

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Children in Care and Care Leavers

Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 24

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1. Overview

Northumberland County Council’s Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2022 -2024 sets out the Council’s approach to meeting its responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care and care leavers. This current review of our sufficiency strategy is taking place in the context of the national independent review of children's social care, of which the provision of placements is a key element. The interim report of that review, the Case for Change (June 2021) has highlighted the national challenges and that the current market does not effectively meet the placement needs of children and young people.

In Northumberland, we aim to provide the right service at the right time for families recognising that at times families require additional support to help them stay together. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that we do. If it is not safe for children to stay at home then we will intervene and strive to ensure they are given the care, support and stability that they deserve.

As corporate parents, underpinned by our leadership pledge, we will strive relentlessly to provide the best quality care and support to our looked after children and care leavers that we can. We recognise the importance of safe and secure placements to ensure children in our care live happy, healthy lives and achieve the best possible outcomes that they can. This is provided through well supported placements that meet the child’s needs. We will place our children in a family setting wherever we can, unless their needs are better met in residential or other care settings.

The duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (Children in Care) is explicit in the Children Act 1989. These regulations require a strategy to be in place that describes how local authorities intend to provide sufficient care placements for its children in care. The introduction of Sufficiency Statutory Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations has provided further clarity on the implementation of section 22G of the Act.

This Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for local authorities to work with key partners to be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority’s area.

The Guidance requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be ‘sufficient’ in terms of the number of beds provided. They must also have regard to the benefits of securing a number of providers and a range of services. Fundamentally, the accommodation available must meet the needs of children.

To structure this strategy, we are using the guidance developed for the Local Government Association (LGA) in May 2021 which aims to establish a nationwide framework for producing

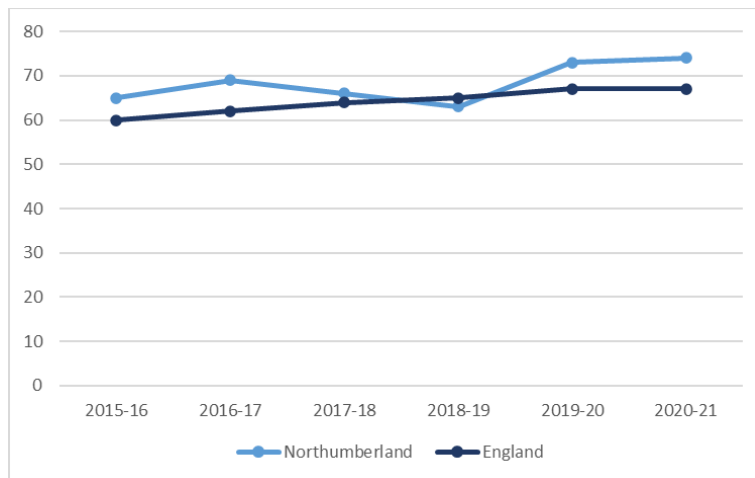
sufficiency statements to support consistent monitoring of need, delivery and value for money across the country.

This strategy sets out the overall approach to managing demand, focusing specifically on the right solutions. It identifies appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is looked after achieves their potential. To ensure this strategy is robust, we have drawn on a wide range of available data, including historical trend, comparator data, and current service data which gives us evidence of trends and needs around placement provision so we can develop the right resources.

2. Demand for placements

2.1 Population of children in care

Figure 1. Children in care as at 31 March 2021 as a share of total population of children



Analysis

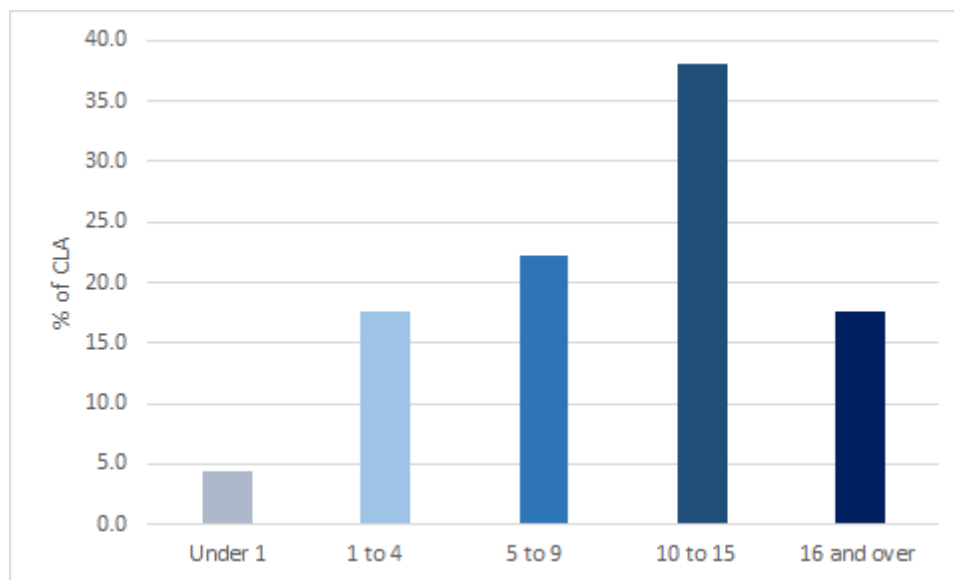
During 2020/21 Northumberland County Council (NCC) did experience a slight increase in the numbers of children looked after. This followed a rise between 2018 and 2020, our analysis of which showed a higher-than-average number of children entering care, the majority of whom had been subject to child protection plans which had escalated to require intervention. An audit of this indicated appropriate decision making. The average numbers of children leaving care were broadly in line with the usual numbers. More generally, a higher proportion of 5 to 9-year-olds had entered care than in previous years and there was an increase in children entering care from a specific geographical area.

More recently the numbers of children looked after has decreased again to be around 67 per 10,000 which is in line with the national average. The number of children looked after has been impacted by the Covid pandemic and the consequences for the court system to process care proceedings and the availability of services to deliver support and interventions in a timely way.

What have we done

We have in place robust systems to ensure rigour and scrutiny and senior management oversight of decisions for children to become looked after and that all safe and appropriate alternatives to becoming looked after have been considered. As well as our independent reviewing, we also have put in place performance and tracking systems to support the timely progression of plans for children who are looked after, including discharge where appropriate.

Figure 2. Children in care by age group (as a share of total LAC population), 2021



Note: The figure includes the number of children in care as at March 31, 2021.

Analysis

The gender split of children in care tends to be more even in Northumberland than the national and regional pictures, with 52% of children at March 2021 being male (48% female), compared to 56% male (44% female) nationally, and 55% male (45% female) regionally.

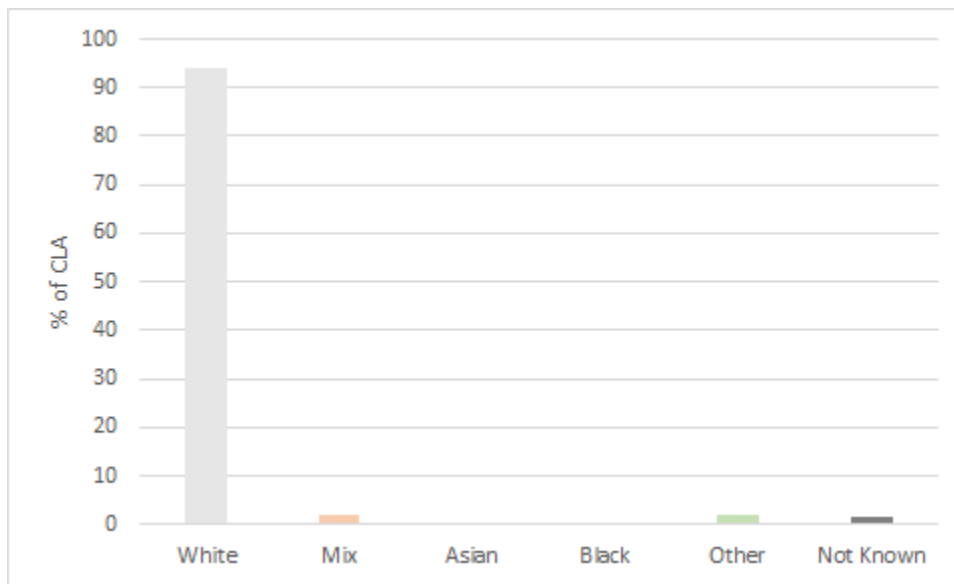
As at March 2021, 56% of the children in care were aged 10 or over, which is consistent with the previous five years. Compared to the national picture, Northumberland has a lower proportion of children in care aged 16 or over (18% at March 2021, compared to 23% nationally), but a higher proportion aged 1 to 9 (40% at March 2021, compared to 33% nationally). The proportion of Northumberland’s children in care within the 5 to 9 year old age group has gradually increased each year - from 18% in March 2018 to 22% in March 2021 (see above).

There are no specific issues relating to the sufficiency of placements based on gender and while there are more challenges for consistently finding placements for children aged 10-15, it is the range and specificity of their wider needs rather than age which determines placement availability.

What have we done

Recruitment of our in-house foster carers is targeted to specific areas of placement need. Our recruitment process ensures we explore and explains the various roles in foster care, for example, different age profiles of children, skill base of applicants, developmental stages of children. For more details about foster care recruitment see below.

Figure 3. Children in care by ethnic background (as a share of total CLA population), March 31 2021



Note: The figure includes the number of children in care as at March 31, 2021.

Analysis

Nationally, 75% of looked after children are White, in Northumberland this figure is 94% which reflects the demographic profile of Northumberland (90% are White regionally). 2% are mixed race in Northumberland compared to 10% nationally and 3% regionally.

We continue to be inclusive in our foster care recruitment campaigns to ensure it reflects the communities that our children and families live in.

What have we done

Where children are placed with carers who are from a different background we ensure that specific work and support is in place to meet the children’s needs relating to background, culture and identity.

Future challenges

To increase the percentage of carers and placements that are other than White British we ensure our marketing campaign is inclusive and diverse, for example, in relation to ethnicity, age, gender.

Figure 4. Legal status of children in care as at March 31 2021

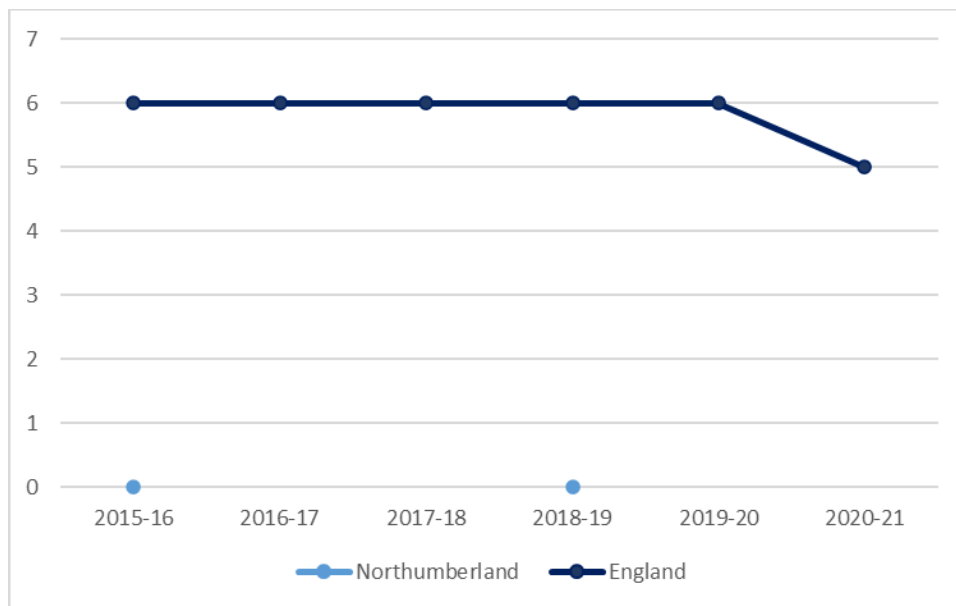


Note. The figure includes information on the legal status of children looked after at March 31 in the year of interest.

Analysis

The legal status of children looked after in detailed in figure 4 is in line with national and regional comparators and does not indicate that changes are required to current practice. The practice and processes in place to manage and oversee children becoming looked after including the planning and appropriate legal status is referenced elsewhere in the strategy.

Figure 5. Children in care who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers as a share of the total CLA population



Note: The figure includes the number of children in care as at March 31, 2021 who were unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Analysis

As of 31st March 2021, 5 young people who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people (UASC). This number has since reduced to 3 young people as two young people have now turned 18. Overall, we are supporting a total of 13 young people who are unaccompanied young people, 3 are under 18 and 10 are over 18 and have care leavers status.

What have we done

On arrival, young people who are 16 or 17 are supported to access a Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS) support tenancy and will live with other UASc young people whilst the claim for asylum is processed. Once a decision is made on their claim for asylum and where leave to remain is granted, young people are often supported to access their own tenancy via Northumberland Homefinder and they are given priority status as care leavers.

We also have a number of young people with outstanding asylum claims, who have turned 18, which is impacting on move on plans for them and as a result is blocking placements for any new referrals.

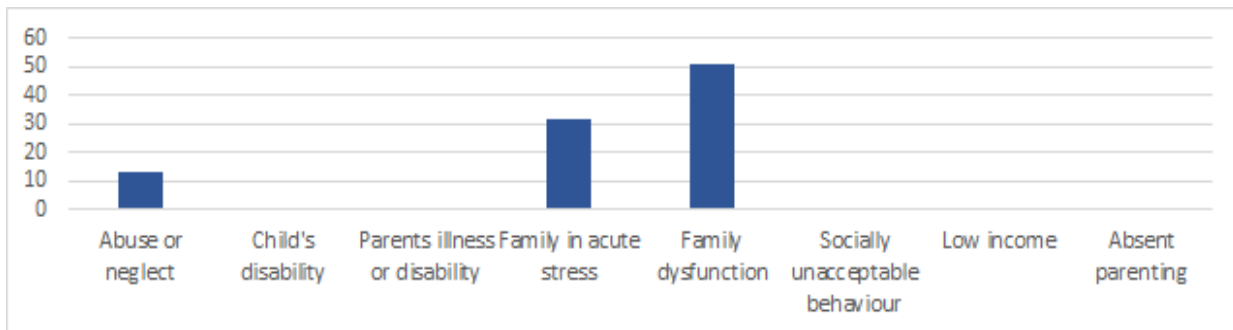
Work is on-going with the regional office for the home office to progress the claims and discussions are taking place with our partners within housing to source suitable properties.

Future challenges

In terms of forward planning and pressures being faced, NCC is part of the wider National Transfer Scheme and are participating in the national rota through which the allocations are mandatory. Due to the increasing number of arrivals in the south of the country, further requests for placements are being made over and above the original planned rota of placements. At the time of writing, we have been able to provide placements for UASC allocated to Northumberland as part of the national rota but this has the potential to become problematic in terms of being able to source appropriate placements to meet these requests consistently in future.

2.2 Needs of children in care

Figure 6. Children who started to be looked after during 2021 by primary need category



Note: The figure shows the proportion of children who started to be looked after during the year ending March 31, 2021 by recorded need category

Analysis

Figure 6 indicates the primary reason for children becoming looked after. This information is drawn from documents completed at the point that children enter care. In many cases, the reasons are complex and cannot be fitted neatly into one category so this graph needs to be viewed as an indicator and it is correct to state that the combined impact of abuse, neglect, family

stress and dysfunction influences the decision for most children when they are accommodated. Socially unacceptable behavior is often a factor for young people and this tends to accompany one of the other recorded categories.

We have separate data relating to children with a disability later in the strategy.

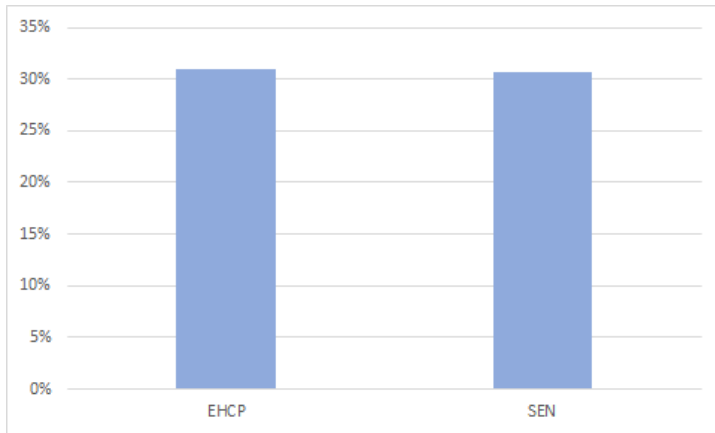
Table 1

Difficulties in providing placements for children across primary need categories	Currently		Over the next 1-3 years	
	Council	England	Council	England
Abuse or neglect	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Child's disability	Red	Red	Red	Red
Parent's illness or disability	Green	Green	Green	Green
Family in acute stress	amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Family dysfunction	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Socially unacceptable behaviour	Red	Red	Amber	Red
Low income	green	Green	Green	Amber
Absent parenting	green	Amber	Green	Amber

Notes: Red indicates that the council expects that they will face difficulties meeting demand through existing suppliers and/or needs to produce services at high costs; Amber indicates that the council expects that they will mostly meet demand through existing providers at reasonable costs, but there are cases where that is not true; Green indicates that the council expects they will meet demand through existing supply at reasonable cost.

The national average is calculated based on the responses provided by the 34 councils that responded to the survey.

Figure 7. Children in care with special needs and disabilities (as a share of total CLA population), 2021



Note: The figure includes the proportion of children in care as at March 31, 2021.

Analysis

Figure 7 demonstrates that a significant proportion of our children looked after population have been identified as having special educational needs or requiring an Education Health and Care Plan.

In terms of placement provision, the numbers of children looked after with a disability has remained fairly constant at 16% in 2019/20 and 14% 2020/21 although the numbers entering care with a disability have increased from 6% to 8%. While it is more difficult to evidence statistically, it is viewed that the complexity of their needs is increasing. This can make finding foster care and residential placements difficult although we do have some notable exceptions to this.

What have we done

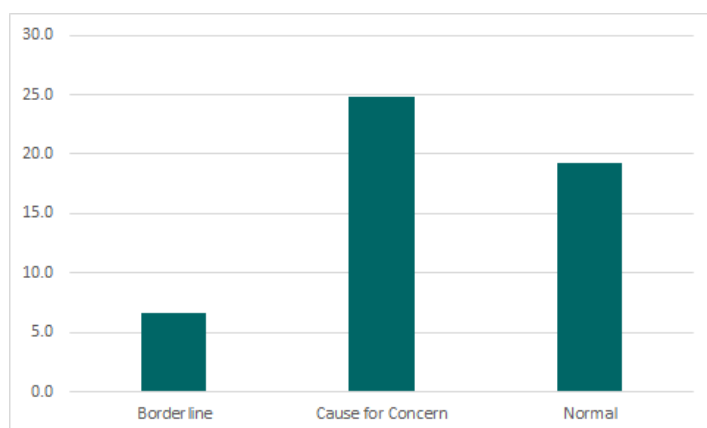
The local authority and partners have responded to this by increasing its resource into the Virtual school for children with SEND, allocating resource within its CYPS service specifically for children looked after and increased the resource into its social work service for disabled children. The number of children with a range of complex disabilities and mental health needs is increasing and finding placements for these, both within fostering and residential services is an ongoing challenge. In response the multi-agency partnership is working together more proactively at an earlier stage to try and continue to support children in their family home where appropriate.

More specifically, work is progressing as part of the SEND strategy to develop and expand the short break service to further enhance the support available for disabled children to maintain them within their families.

Future challenges and actions

The range of residential provision, especially locally, for disabled children is very limited with some providers closing recently and others struggling with staffing challenges. We do not anticipate that this will change significantly in coming years.

Figure 8. Proportion of looked after children by SDQ score (as a share of total CLA population), 2021



Note: The figure includes the proportion of looked after children whose SDQ score was normal, borderline, and cause of concern

What have we done

We have introduced a range of trauma informed practice training for staff to support looked after children and are increasing the mental health practitioner resource into children's social care, building on the practitioners already within our adolescent service, to support children, families and professionals where there is additional support needed to understand their complex emotional wellbeing needs including children looked after.

In addition we have reviewed our guidance for carers, schools and social workers to support them when completing SDQ's and also interpreting and using the information to support young people.

2.3 Care Leavers

	17-18 year old	19 – 21 year old
Number of Care Leavers by age as of 31st March 2021	30	121

Analysis

We currently support 151 care leavers between the ages of 17 to 21 years of age and Northumberland Adolescent Service oversees the support provided to young people who have left care, through the provision of allocated leaving care support workers.

It is our responsibility to ensure that every young person has a completed pathway plan, that outlines a young person’s transition towards independence. This includes ensuring young people have access to appropriate and suitable accommodation as well as being supported to access education, employment and training opportunities.

Figure 9. Care leavers by suitability of accommodation (as a share of total population of care leavers), 2021



Note: The figure includes care leavers in the year ending March 31, 2021, aged 17 and 18 and 19 to 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday

Analysis

As can be seen in figure 9, a very high percentage ,92%, of all care leavers were deemed to be living in suitable accommodation, which equates to 139 young people. The main reason for the vast majority of those who are deemed not to be in suitable accommodation is that they are in custody (6 young people).

Young people accessed a variety of accommodation options in the year up to 31st March 2021. However, for those age 17-18, most remained in their existing accommodation or moved into supported accommodation. Only 13% of those in this age accessed their own tenancy. This is in comparison to young people aged 19-21, which saw 47% of young people accessing their own tenancy.

What have we done

To ensure young people have access to appropriate accommodation, there is a Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Protocol in place, which is a multi-agency protocol and provides support around accommodation for young people who are preparing to leave care as well as those who have already left care.

In order to meet the needs of young people making the transition towards independence, care leavers are given priority banding via Northumberland Homefinder and this enables young people to access their own tenancy in a timely manner, as and when ready.

For those young people who may not be ready to access their own tenancy, there is an option to support young people to access a variety of supported accommodation options. Supported accommodation options within Northumberland are commissioned services and are subject to quality and performance monitoring checks.

In January 2021, a new supported accommodation framework was commissioned and implemented in recognition that the previous framework was not meeting the wider support needs of young people, including those with complex support needs. As a result, a new service specification was developed to meet the identified gaps in service provision.

The new framework is working effectively and the gaps in provision are being addressed by the new provisions added to the framework. There is a robust quality monitoring process in place that includes quarterly contract and performance meetings being held with providers, Northumberland Adolescent Service and Children Services Commissioning. In addition to this, there is also a wider supported accommodation providers forum that meets quarterly.

In addition to supported accommodation options, young people who are in foster carer also can remain with their foster carers post 18 as a Staying Put arrangement. As of 31st March 2021, we had 15 young people in a staying put arrangement and this continues to be promoted as a positive option for young people.

We have worked closely with adult services and with external specialist providers to commission a range of Independent Supported Living (ISL) arrangements for children over the age of sixteen within Northumberland. This has resulted in an increase in our ISL arrangements over the 2020/21 period to nine with four still being in place as of the end of March 2021.

For those young people who are in custody, a CLASP meeting will be held prior to discharge from custody to ensure that there is a clear route to accommodation for young people once they come to the end of their sentence and will involve their allocated worker, the Youth Justice Service, Housing and Probation, where appropriate.

Future challenges

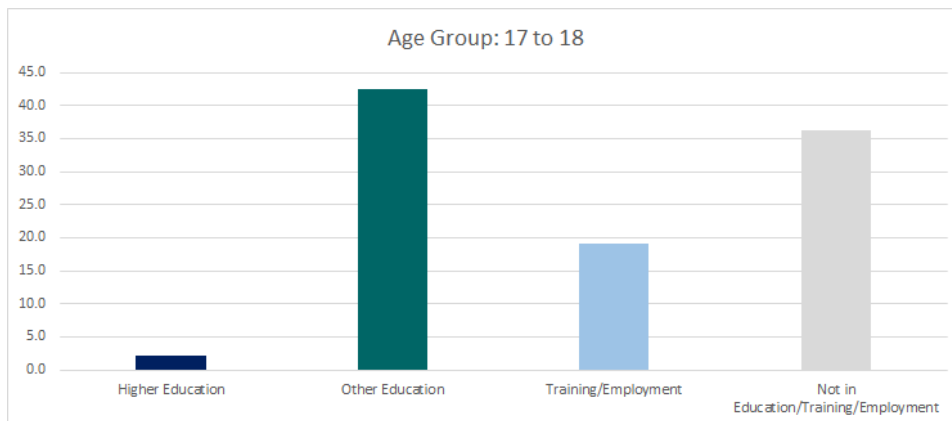
At the time of writing, it is likely that there will be increased regulation and independent oversight of placements for young people aged 16 and 17 which are currently unregistered and unregulated. As detailed above, we have put systems in place to oversee the quality of the provision from a local authority perspective and we will need to respond to any national developments.

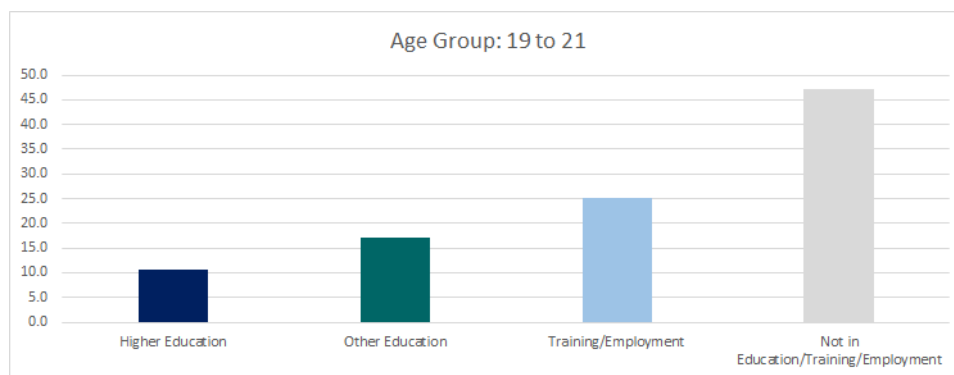
Whilst we have very good multi-agency support in place for young people and work closely with housing and adult services to try and address the accommodation needs of young people post 18 as detailed above some challenges remain with respect to young people who may have multiple complex needs, such as offending, substance misuse and mental health. In such instances, it can become difficult to identify and sustain appropriate accommodation for young people with these presenting needs.

In order to ensure performance and address future gaps in service, a performance dashboard is being developed that will identify unmet need around accommodation provision and monitor the referral processes in place.

Education, Employment and Training Opportunities for Young People (EET)

Figure 10. Care leavers by type of activity (as a share of the total population of care leavers), 2021





Note: The figure includes care leavers in the year ending March 31, 2021, aged 17 and 18 and 19 to 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday. The figure does not include care leavers for whom the activity is not known.

Analysis

As can be seen from figure 10, education options for young people are split across three main types, those attending university, those in further education and those in training or employment. For those aged 17-18, most young people were accessing further education options such as college or access courses in preparation for university.

This changes as young people get older with more young people accessing training and employment between the ages of 19-21. We also see an increase in young people attending university in this age group as they move through the further education options they have accessed when aged 17-18.

What have we done

It is recognised that there are still a number of young people not accessing any education, employment or training options (NEET) within both age groups. Work is on-going to support those who are NEET to find suitable options to meet the individual needs of those young people. Discussions take place within regular EET clinics in which partners from the education and the DWP attend and advise of the opportunities available to young people.

Ongoing work is in place to provide care leavers opportunities to access traineeships and apprenticeships within the county council, ensuring all services are aware of their responsibility as a corporate parent to support all young people who are looked after or care leavers.

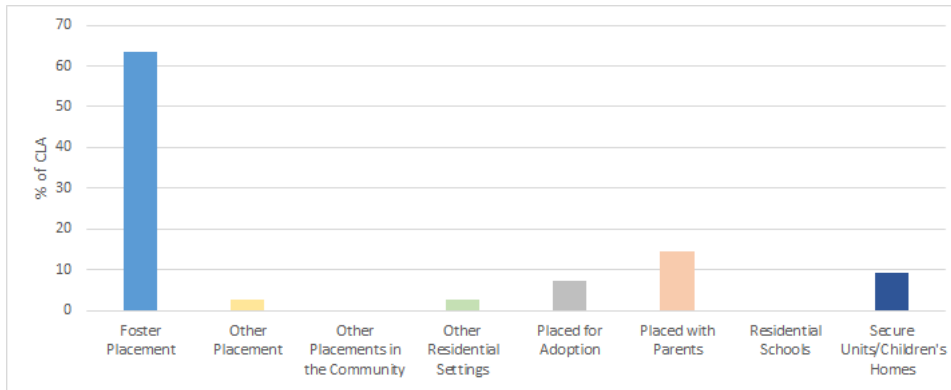
3. Supply of placements

3.1 Provision of placements

The Sufficiency Duty requires Northumberland to have a range of appropriate quality accommodation options for children in care and care leavers. The type of accommodation where a child is placed will depend on their assessed needs. The suitability of the accommodation for each individual placement is an important component to improving placement stability.

Placement stability is one of the highest priorities for us and there are a range of wrap-around services being piloted and developed to improve the child’s experience and support placement stability.

Figure 11. Children in care by type of placement (as a share of the total CLA population), 2021



Note: The figure includes the proportion of children in care as at March 31, 2021

Analysis

Figure 11 shows the varied placement types that children looked after are living in. As at the end of March 66% of children were living in a foster placement and 12% were living in a residential placement.

Of the placements, 65% are provided by Northumberland County Council compared to a national figure showing 49% of placements are provided by the local authority responsible. 14% of the total were living in a placement provided by either private firms or by the voluntary and community sector. This compares favourably to the national average (36%) and regional average (20%); and demonstrates that, where possible, we look to maximise our in-house placement provision.

The number and percentage of children placed with parents significantly increased in line with regional trends and reflecting court trends and outcomes. This has impacted on the percentage of children placed in foster care when compared nationally. This does mean however, that 85% of our children looked after were in a family setting in line with our principle of placing in a family setting where possible and where this meets the child's needs.

What we have done

Whilst this table does not evidence unplanned or emergency placements we have appropriately accommodated children in to care in registered and regulated placements with the majority of children being placed in foster care placements. When necessary, we have been creative in pulling together packages of support to accommodate children in an emergency.

Audit work was undertaken in relation to children placed with parents that concluded that these children are appropriately placed with plans in place for progressing the care plan and when

appropriate the discharge of the court order. Since the review was initiated, the applications to discharge these care orders have increased where it is appropriate to do so and the numbers of children placed with parents on care orders is reducing. See below for more detail on foster care and residential care.

Adoption

Analysis

The detail of adoption placement activity for Northumberland can be found in the Adopt North East (ANE) annual report. The performance in the year 20/21 has significantly improved from the previous year which was the first full year of operation of ANE. The key information is contained in the summary table below:

Activity	2019/20	2020/21
Children matched	20	40
Children placed	21	40
Children adopted	21	26

Performance around placing children for adoption in Northumberland is good, with a higher percentage of children leaving care and being adopted equating to 16% which is higher than the national (10%) and regional (13%) averages.

What we have done

We have continued to work with ANE overseeing, challenging and supporting the ongoing developments and performance of the agency. In Northumberland, we continue to identify and support children who are harder to place for adoption and we still have a higher than national average percentage of children leaving care to be adopted.

We continue to use interagency adoption placements (IA) for children that ANE cannot identify adopters within their own cohort. This is so children are secured in a permanent placement in a timely way in line with care planning and decision making for them to reach their full potential.

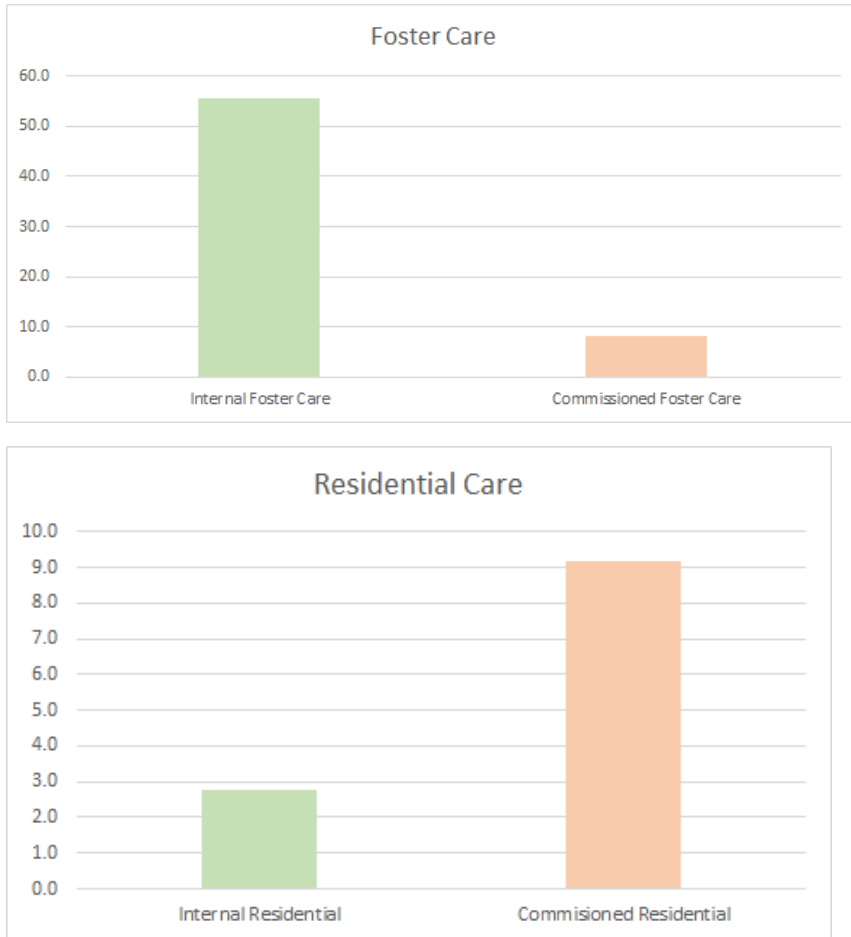
Foster to adopt continues to be embedded into social work practice. This directly links to the improvements in care planning for unborn babies and young babies, which supports the timely achievement of permanence for young children. We have increased our usage of foster to adopt placements but aim to increase this more.

Future challenges

While the performance of ANE has improved as detailed above, there remain challenges to locate adoptive placements in a timely way for harder to place children and to reduce the number of

children who are placed interagency. While we have seen an increase in the numbers of children who are placed in early permanence placements in Northumberland, this remains an area for on-going development for Northumberland.

Figure 12. Children in care by placement provider (as a share of the total CLA population), 2021



Note: the figures include the proportion of children in care as at March 31, 2021, by type of place

Figure 13 Number of fostering households, 2021

	2019	2020	2021
Number of fostering households (internal)	132	166	175
Number of fostering households (IFAs)	41	35	32

Note. The table includes the number of fostering households (internal) and the number of fostering households (IFA) at March 31 of each year.

Foster care

Analysis

Figure 12 shows that the number of children placed with our own approved foster carers remains higher than the national average. We have continued to reduce our reliance on external independent fostering agencies but we continue to use them as a valuable resource if the needs of the child cannot be met by an in-house placement. Over twenty children who are placed in a long-term IFA placement have been formally approved as long term to provide certainty and security for those children.

Figure 13 shows that we have seen an increase in the number of fostering households. Some of the deregistration of foster carers has been due to several reasons including foster carers retiring having moved a young person on to independent living and foster carers adopting children.

What we have done

We have maximised our own placement capacity and ensured approval categories for our foster carers are flexible. We have maintained a core cohort of our foster carers therefore securing a stable and experienced set of foster carers.

We continue to place children with family and friend's carers, also known as connected persons or kinship carers. These are individuals who already have an established relationship with the child who they start to look after and subsequently become approved foster carers having usually been initially approved as a temporary Regulation 24 carer. The number of family and friend's carers has decreased slightly. This is due to children leaving care by way of securing permanence via an alternative legal order.

We continue to base our foster care recruitment strategy on analysis of current and emerging areas of need of children and young people and consider the demographics of the county. We are successful in recruiting foster carers that can look after children aged under 12 years of age. We recognise and continue to undertake targeted recruitment for foster carers who can look after sibling groups, teenagers and offer long term care to children until they reach adulthood. We ensure our recruitment advertising is inclusive so that individuals are drawn to Northumberland and can see the benefits of fostering with us to look after children locally.

We have improved our processes for identifying, matching and securing children in long term foster care.

Northumberland is collaborating with the 11 other local authorities in the North East (NE) Region to implement the Mockingbird programme. The Mockingbird programme is an innovative method of delivering foster care using an extended family model which provides sleepovers and short breaks, peer support, regular joint planning and training, and social activities. Evidence

from the programme is that it improves the stability of fostering placements and strengthens the relationships between carers, children and young people, fostering services and birth families.

We also continue to engage with businesses to provide foster friendly working conditions for their staff who are foster carers.

Future challenges

There is further need to increase the number of placements offered by our foster carers for specific cohorts of children. This includes teenagers that may present with specific challenging needs, emergency placements and carers that will look after sibling groups long term.

We will continue to invest in and implement the Mockingbird model detailed above. This will help to reduce the current pressure by supporting placement stability and foster carer retention at scale and complements the strategic aims of NE authorities to grow in-house fostering provision and keep children close to home. It will take 2 years for the first two constellations to be in place from the launch date that is planned for January 2022.

Strengthening support to our in house foster carers is also being progressed by the delivery of training that will use the foundations of a Non-Violent Resistance Parenting Approach and will include attachment-based parenting principles to support connection and co-regulation. This will impact positively on placement stability regarding more complex children that have experienced trauma and loss and as a result, can present with challenging behaviours. The launch date for the first training programme is February 2022.

The market for and recruitment and retention of foster carers has been identified as a national challenge and will also be considered as part of the independent review of children's social care.

Residential care

Analysis

The percentage of children placed in residential care in Northumberland is in line with national average of 12%. All bar one of the children's homes in Northumberland are rated as good or outstanding.

What we have done

We have strengthened and aligned the management and oversight of our residential homes with our family placement service with the aim of both enhancing the support to our homes and to enhance the placement planning for our children.

We have continued to use out of county placements due to a demand for residential provision and the more complex needs of children needing residential care. Children with specific needs cannot always be looked after within NCC’s own provision; for example, children with significant complex health needs, children diagnosed with complex autism.

There is agreed corporate funding to increase the in-house residential placement capacity which is progressing. This is linked to a bid for DfE match funding to support our plan to build and increase the in-house residential capacity in Northumberland to enable us to keep children living within their own communities and keep local connections, particularly with their families.

Future challenges

We aim to further enhance the links between the residential and fostering teams by way of increasing the use of residential care to undertake specific work with children and to support them to move back into a family setting where this is right for them to do so.

We aim to increase the flexible use of short breaks residential care to support both our foster placements and to support children to remain at home.

In some cases, for disabled children with particularly complex needs there is a lack of externally commissioned provision available which is a national issue. Over the last twelve months two local external specialist residential provisions for disabled children have closed.

We will respond to any developments and recommendations arising from the independent review of CSC.

Placement Stability

Stability of placements for children in care	2021
% of children looked after for at least 12 months	70
% of children looked after with three or more placements during the year	14
% of children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	65

Note: This table shows numbers of children in care as at March 31, 2021.

Analysis

The proportion of children in care classed as being in care for long-term who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years has increased slightly to 68% at the end of October 2021

which is in line with the most recent national average of 68%. 82 of the 120 children aged under 16 have been in the same placement for at least two years (or have been placed for adoption).

The proportion of the children in care that had three or more placements is continually monitored however remains an area for improvement. The reason for a placement move can be positive, for example, child returning to the care of birth family, child being placed for adoption, child being placed in long term foster placement.

What have we done

We have set up and undertaken specific work in relation to placements and other elements of stability for children looked after in Northumberland.

Permanence monitoring processes are embedded within practice that tracks and monitors looked after children to ensure they are secured in their permanent placement in a timely way.

We have increased the training for and support to foster carers which is detailed in the earlier section, along with the detailed plans to develop Mockingbird model.

There is strong partnership working in relation children looked after which supports their health and education needs. This has been enhanced by the addition of a specific post within our CYPS (CAMHS) service for children looked after and is to be further added to by additional mental health posts to be embedded within our social work teams funded by the CCG.

We have enhanced the links with our virtual school to ensure education remains a key consideration when planning placement moves.

Future challenges

We continue to strive to further improve the effectiveness of the support and placement provision to our children in care and their carers to increase placement stability.

Commissioned Placements

What we have done

We have a strategic approach to the commissioning of services to meet the social care needs of children in Northumberland.

Whilst regional arrangements for commissioning are in place they are not proving effective enough and there is little or no incentive for providers to participate in commissioning framework agreements. The bulk of spend continues to be off-framework (more so in residential than in fostering placements), with providers not needing to engage in commissioning approaches. Placement-costs and Ofsted matching requirements can make block contracting less feasible. It is recognised that greater system capacity and capability for market management needs to be

developed and there are lessons to be learned from adult services where the duty to ensure sufficient provision, coupled with better developed approaches to quality oversight, enable more dynamic relationships with the independent sector.

Although regional and indeed national work is ongoing, and Northumberland continues to participate in the collaborative IFA arrangements, the pace of change is not quick enough to meet the needs of children who are in need of services now. As a result, Northumberland has chosen to invest in a more individualised approach creating 2 x Commissioning and Relationship Development Posts. A pivotal part of this role is to develop relationships with providers within the social care arena with the purpose of working with them to achieve positive outcomes for our children looked after in Northumberland. It includes providing an effective commissioning approach to brokerage within and between Children’s Commissioning, Social Care and market providers to build productive and positive relationships that lead to the appropriate identification and matching of placements. Considerations include balancing the need to identify a suitable package of care, often within a tight timescale timescales whilst promoting value for money in a supplier led market. Once a child/young person is placed with a provider, there continues to be linkage with the social care teams in order to enhance the CLA review process by identifying provider trends and themes whilst reviewing the ongoing suitability of the placement ensuring that good quality monitoring and evaluation frameworks support and inform decision making.

Table 2

Overall experiences and progress of C&YP	Care				
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inspectorate, not Ofsted	Registration Cert
IFA	3	13		1	
Children's Home	4	14	2	4	3

How well C&YP are helped & protected	Care				
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inspectorate, not Ofsted	Registration Cert
IFA	1	15		1	
Children's Home	1	16	3	4	3

Effectiveness of leaders & managers	Care				
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inspectorate, not Ofsted	Registration Cert
IFA	2	11	3	1	
Children's Home	5	11	4	4	3

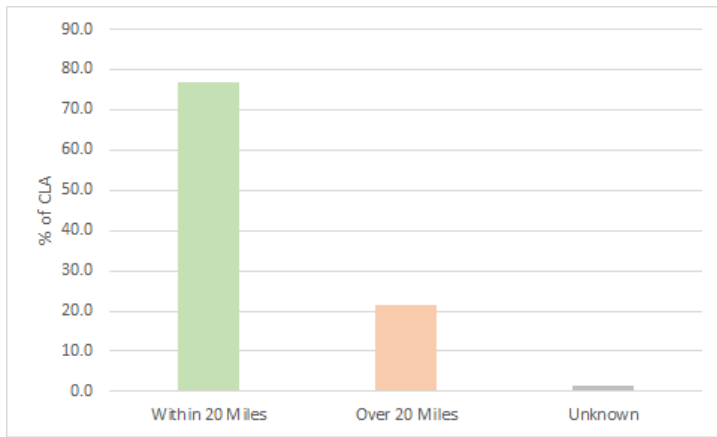
Note: The table includes outcomes from Ofsted inspections of IFAs and children’s homes (both internal and external). Numbers of IFAs and children’s homes are presented by inspection outcomes. Information

on Ofsted inspection outcomes for residential schools and secure home is not shown here, as they represent a small proportion of available residential settings.

We aim to place children in any external provision that is Ofsted rated at a minimum as good. Should a provider’s Ofsted rating drop below this standard it would not directly result in the child being moved to an alternative provision as this will be balanced against the needs of the child, the issues raised by Ofsted and close monitoring, review of the action plan and assurance visits.

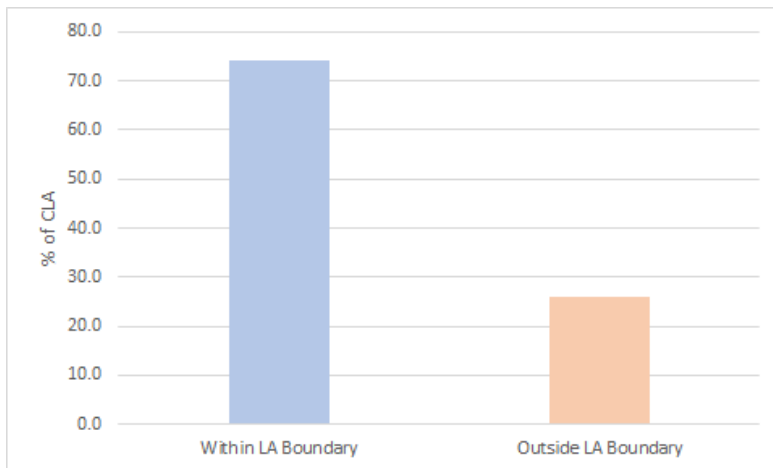
3.2 Location of placements

Figure 14. Children in care by the distance between the placement and home (as a share of total population of CLA), 2021



Note: The figure includes numbers of children in care at March 31, 2021.

Figure 15. Children in care placed within and outside the LA boundary, (as a share of total population of CLA), 2021



Note: the figure includes numbers of children in care at March 31, 2021.

Analysis

The percentage of children placed within 20 miles of their home address in the year 20/21 is 75% which is better than the national average of 71%.

Given the size of the county some children living outside of the boundary may actually be living closer to their home community than if they were placed within the county. For those children living more than twenty miles away the placement decision is one that is made usually as a result of the complexity of their needs and the requirement for a residential placement which cannot be found within close proximity to the county boundaries.

What have we done

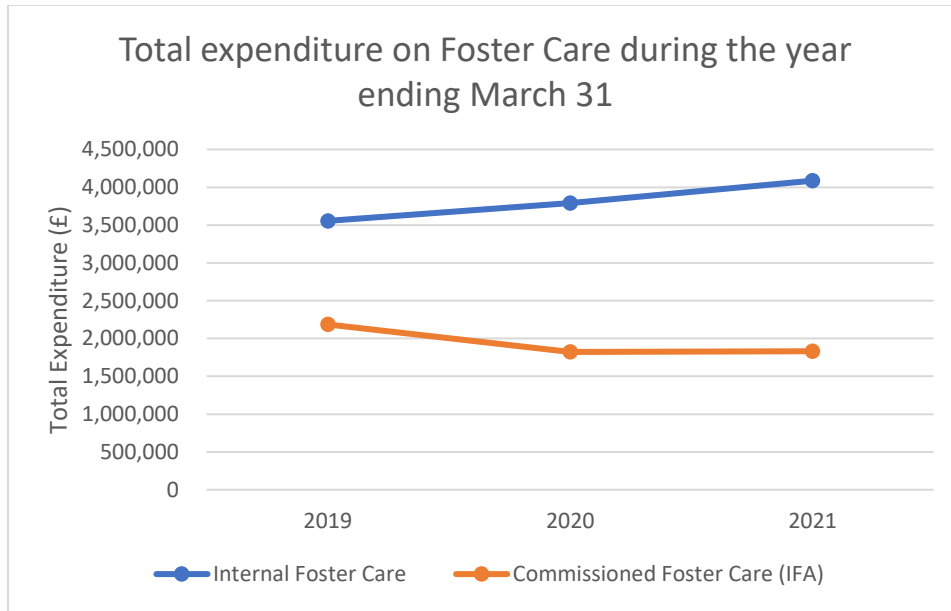
As detailed in the earlier section, we are planning to increase our in-house residential provision to further enhance our capacity for local placements as well as our ongoing recruitment activity for foster carers.

We have robust systems in place where external provision is requested to ensure that all supports and alternatives have been considered and to inform the commissioning of appropriate placements to meet the needs of those children where these cannot be met in-house.

3.3 Cost of placements

The costs of placements for our children looked after is the largest expenditure and biggest pressure on the children's social care budget. We always prioritise the needs of children in our placement practice and within this we do have to consider operating in the most cost-efficient way for the use of public money. As can be seen in other areas of this strategy, Northumberland do have a greater percentage of in-house provision than national comparators and this is predicated on the quality of provision that we are able to offer. We have reduced the use of IFA placements as detailed below and we plan to enhance our in-house residential capacity to further support local provision and reduce the cost of external residential placements.

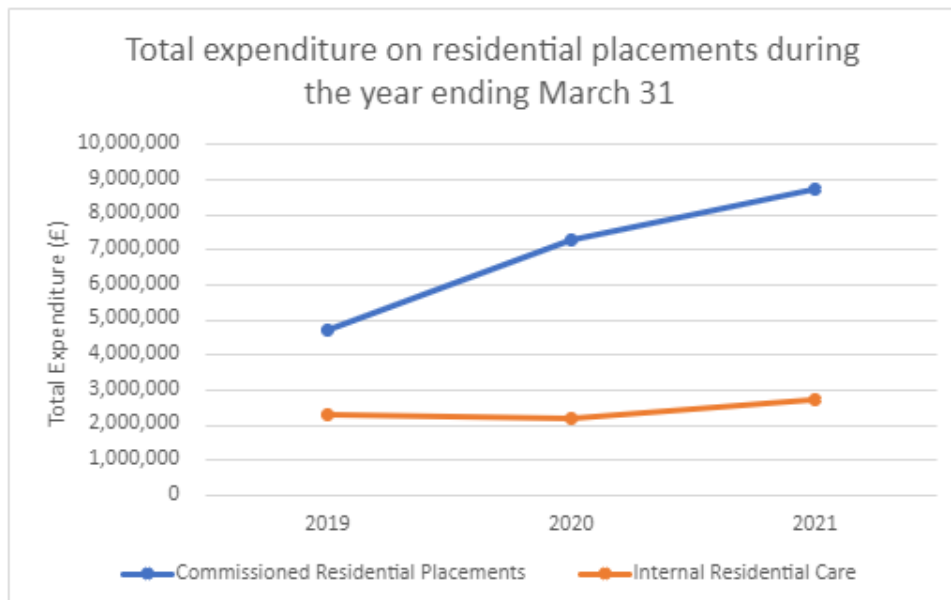
Figure 16. Total expenditure in foster care including staying put costs in IFA's during the year ending March 31



Note. Council figures do not include management & other internal costs while expenditure on commissioned services includes overhead costs.

Our cost of in house foster care placements has reduced as we have continued to maximise our own placement provision. This has impacted on our cost of external IFA placements that has significantly reduced however has then remained relatively static during 2020/21. This is due to a number of young people remaining in an IFA placement long term. The costs increase slightly as the young person gets old. This costs also included young people who are in IFA staying put placements.

Figure 17. Total expenditure in residential placements during the year ending March 31



Note. *The figure only includes expenditure in residential placements (management & other internal costs are not taken under consideration).*

The cost of external commissioned placements has significantly increased over the last 2 years which has coincided with the increase in our overall children looked after population. This supports our vision to increase our own residential placement to ensure value for money however most importantly so that children can stay local to their own support networks, communities and families. We will always need to access external residential provision for a number of children and we will continue to strengthen our commissioning arrangements.

3.4 Challenges in providing placements and related services

Overall, we aim to place children that need looking after within our own in-house provision where this can meet their needs. This is based primarily on the quality of the provision we can offer and that this is more likely to maintain the key relationships and links for the child. We have a significant number of our children placed with family and friends foster carers and a key element of our practice model is to ensure that we effectively engage the family's support network at the earliest possible stage to support the parents. However where this is not possible to be done safely, we can approach family members and friends who are already known to the child in the first instance.

The building of new NCC owned residential provision within the county is an important part of the strategy as it allows more children and young people to be cared for in house with the potential of staying closer to their birth family connections and support structures.

Additional NCC owned children's homes within the county would allow for the provision of more "in-house" care at a reduced cost compared to commissioned placements. NCC owned provisions are at a lower cost however this does not and should not compromise the quality of care and that the level provided is equal to or greater than a commissioned provision.

Recruiting staff to our residential homes is a challenge, as it is nationally. We are therefore developing a Recruitment Strategy to address this that will include, for example, our innovation with our apprenticeship scheme offer that incorporates 'grow your own' model of practice.

To achieve best value, funding has been secured to increase our in house residential capacity by 7 placements. This includes a new build and an extension on one of our current children's homes. To maximise our short break provision, as part of the review, consideration is being given to a 24/7 5 bedded provision which will include 2 emergency assessment placements. This would enhance the level of support to families and carers within the community as well as offering this provision to looked after children that in turn supports placement stability.

New legislation came into force in September 2021 in relation to placing vulnerable children under the age of 16 in unregulated accommodation as part of a series of reforms to drive up

standards in children’s social care. Children in care under 16 years of age will no longer be allowed to be accommodated in unregulated independent or semi-independent placements. While the aim of this legislation is to ensure the most vulnerable are cared for in settings that best meet their needs, this places even more pressure on already scarce resources needed to accommodate young people who need emergency accommodation and where authorities have used this, it is in the absence of any alternative placement options. Opportunities to develop emergency provision are detailed in the above paragraph.

The local authority has seen some challenges with its residential short break provision over the last year; it currently commissions one provider and has one internal provision. Both of these have had challenges with staffing and building suitability which have led to a reduction of provision available. In addition to this an external provision in a neighbouring authority used by a small number of families of children with particularly complex needs closed at the start of the pandemic and has made the decision not to reopen. The needs of children requiring residential overnight short break provision are growing more complex and we are working with our commissioned provider to respond to these.

Kyloe House Secure Unit provides placements, nationally, for up to 14 young people, this includes a 2 bedded transition unit within the perimeter of Kyloe House. The age range is 12 to 17 years on admission although young people can be accepted at age 10 with Secretary of State approval. The placement period will be dependent on needs to meet the identified Care Plan and ongoing requirements of the young person. The unit accommodates young people on a welfare basis. Grants have been secured from the DfE regarding a number of improvements to the unit.

Specialist care provision for those children who are being exploited or who have sexually harmful behaviour will continue to need to be externally commissioned because of the relatively small numbers and special requirements of the support they need.

Table 3.

Difficulties in meeting the demand for placement of children in care	Currently		Over the next 1-3 years	
	Council	England	Council	England
Meet demand for placements	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber
Meet demand for foster care	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Meet demand for residential care	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber

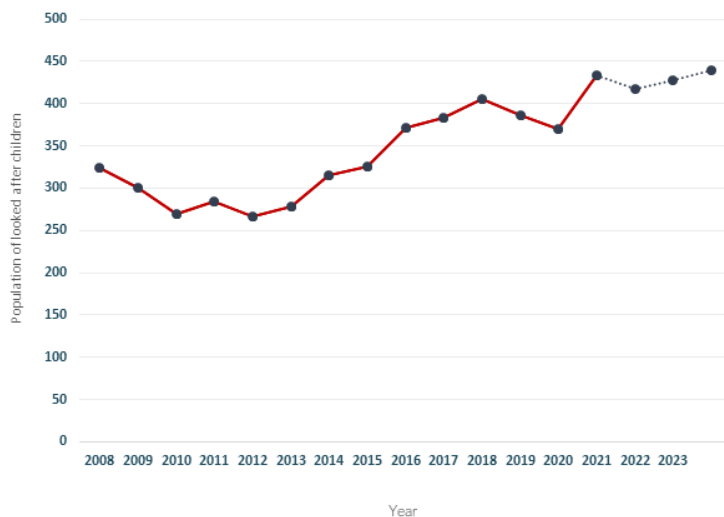
Notes: Red indicates that the council expects that they will face difficulties meeting demand through existing suppliers and/or needs to produce services at high costs; Amber indicates that the council expects that they will mostly meet demand through existing providers at reasonable costs, but there are cases where that is not true; Green indicates that the council expects they will meet demand through existing supply at reasonable cost.

The national average is calculated based on the responses provided by the 34 councils that responded to the survey.

4. Projections on demand for placements

Northumberland has traditionally had a lower than regional average number of children looked after. This increased during the first twelve months of the pandemic for a variety of reasons including court timetables being significantly delayed. We have recently seen this number reduce and flatten out to a level more in line with what we were experiencing before the pandemic. While data-based projections do indicate a likely increase in our looked after population, we have in fact managed the placement demand with increased numbers than are currently the position.

Figure 18. Population of children in care – forecasts over 2020-2023



Note: Forecasts are produced using historical data on numbers of children in care at March 31 of each year.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the body of the report we have analysed the information and detailed actions and responses that we have already put in place. We have identified future challenges and planned actions to respond to the needs of our looked after population of children and young people and we will develop those into an action plan to support the implementation of this sufficiency strategy.

We have also identified the national challenges and developments to which we will need to respond as national actions are also required to improve placement sufficiency.

It remains the case that providing stable placements in a timely way for our children looked after is crucial in ensuring we give them the best chance to make the most of their lives and the implementation of this strategy is a key element of this.



Northumberland County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

DATE: 3RD FEBRUARY 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: - Children's Homes Build Progress

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

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of Report

To provide Members an update on the progress of the children's homes builds/plans.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. To note the contents of the report and make any comments for further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report links to the Living Priority of the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2022.

Key Issues

1. To ensure that NCC is meeting its Statutory duties and placement sufficiency duties for children who need to be cared for away from their birth families.
2. To ensure that key actions are in place that will support the provision of residential placements for children in care and care leavers.
3. Placement sufficiency and availability is a key element of the national independent review of children's social care with an interim report noting that the challenges and shortfalls of the current system in providing timely placements for some children.

Background

The Council's Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 –2024, acknowledges the Sufficiency Duty requirements of Northumberland to have a range of appropriate quality accommodation options for children in care and care leavers. The type of accommodation where a child is placed will depend on their assessed needs. The suitability of the accommodation for each individual placement is an important component to improving placement stability. Placement stability is one of the highest priorities for us and there are a range of wrap-around services being piloted and developed to improve the child's experience and support placement stability.

Having a range of options and identifying the right placement for each child is key to stability, permanence and improving outcomes for children. Children living in care in Northumberland experience an average of 3.8 placements in their first two years of their care experience. For the 44% of children entering a residential placement, it is at least their 5th placement whilst in care. The impact of this further compounds their already lived experiences of trauma, potentially impacting on any existing behavioural and emotional difficulties, resulting in the possibility of further placement disruption.

The average duration of a residential placement operated by Northumberland County Council (NCC) over the previous four years is 845.5 days, compared to 457.5 days of a non-NCC operated home. Permanence supports children having a sense of security, continuity, commitment, and identity to support them through childhood. This 84.8% increase in placement stability reinforces that children who are placed in a NCC residential provision receive a greater resilience and commitment, providing evidence that NCC needs to expand and further develop our residential provision offered to our most vulnerable children.

An increase of commissioned placements has significantly increased over the last 2 years which has coincided with the increase in our overall children looked after population. This supports our vision to increase our own residential placement to ensure value for money however most importantly so that children can stay local to their own support networks, communities and families. Additional NCC owned children's homes within the county would allow for the provision of more "in-house" care at a reduced cost compared to commissioned placements. NCC owned provisions are at a lower cost however this does not and should not compromise the quality of care and that the level provided is equal to or greater than a commissioned provision.

An update was provided to the Family And Children's Services scrutiny committee on the 4th November 2021 that gave an overview of the current position within Northumberland in relation to placements for children in care and the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24 was presented to the board on the 5th January 2022.

Sufficiency Duty

The duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (Children in Care) is explicit at section 22G of The Children Act 1989. These regulations require a strategy to be in place that describes how local authorities intend to provide sufficient care placements for its children in care. The introduction of the Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked-After Children Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case

Review Regulations 2010 has provided further clarity on the implementation of section 22G of the Act.

The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for local authorities to work with key partners to be able to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.

Residential Children Homes Developments

An extensive search of properties and land that were within NCC's ownership was completed, resulting in two sites being identified as viable. They both offered good infrastructure to the wider authority and the communities, whilst providing a safe environment for our children to develop the skills to help them recover from their early childhood trauma.

The first scheme achieved planning permission for the development of a 4 bedded property, following a delay in the planning process due to the impact of Covid-19. NCC were required to develop an appropriate planning process to ensure that a sufficient level of governance was applied to all applications. During the initial ground investigation work, two mined coal seams were identified under the proposed site. Following further investigation undertaken by structural engineers it was recommended that this site was no longer viable due to the costs associated to the remedial work and it would not offer good value for money.

The second site achieved planning consent on the 6 July 2021.

As both sites had the same building plans, the tendering process had commenced for the first site (prior to being identified as not a viable option) with the returns identifying a significant shift in development costs, showing an increase of between 40 – 50%. This increases from the original costings were linked to the impact of the pandemic on the building trade, the time span from the quantity surveyor pricing the project and progression to the tendering process and the two projects now being developed separately.

This cost increase and the recommendation from Property Services prompted a review of the current children's homes build/development plan. This resulted in the design team revisiting the original specification, focusing upon a more traditional build. The new plans offered a five bedded property with an estimated projected savings of 28.4% over the returned tendering process. Concurrently there was a review of our children's homes properties, which identified that there would be one property suitable to extended, creating two additional bedrooms to the first floor and additional living and office space to the ground floor.

These outcomes influenced the first scheme being replaced by the extension to our existing property and scheme two progressing with the alteration to a five bedded property, providing a best value project.

The decision was made to postpone the development of the building work to enable an application to the Department for Education's (DfE) new capital funding programme (announced in July 2021 with a submission date in October 2021). This funding was designed to support local authorities to establish new children's homes provision via expansion, refurbishment, or new building work. The successful application was confirmed

on 17 December 2021. The awarding of this grant will enable the homes build/development plan to further support the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24.

Future Actions

The 2 bedded extension to one of our current homes is being progressed with the aim being to have the building work completed by September 2022. The tendering process will begin in January 2022 regarding the new build.

Running parallel to the building plans we will review our short break care provision to ensure it sufficiently supports children with a range of complex disabilities and mental health needs from within the community as well as supporting placement stability for children in care. We will continue to encourage multi-agency partnership working, offering a more proactive approach at an earlier stage to try and continue to support children in their family home where appropriate.

Following a Government consultation in early 2021 in relation to the number of vulnerable children in unregulated placements, an amendment was made to the 2010 Regulations, adding a new Regulation 27A as part of a series of reforms to drive up standards in children's social care. **The effect of this is that a placement by a local authority in an unregulated setting is now unlawful for any looked after child who is under 16 years of age.** While the aim of this legislation is to ensure the most vulnerable children are cared for in settings that best meet their needs, this places even more pressure on already scarce resources needed to accommodate young people who need emergency accommodation and where authorities have used this, it is in the absence of any alternative placement options. A review of our emergency provision will be completed to ensure the strategy focuses, specifically on the right solutions, identifying appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is Looked After achieves their potential.

Conclusion

In total 69% of our children currently living in a residential placement have previously lived in a residential or foster placement, again reinforcing that the resilience of placement is key to creating stability for children. We know that our residential provisions in Northumberland maintain placements by an 88% average better than any other type of placement. We do not end placements, due to a child's presenting behaviour, ensuring that all transitions are planned.

The building of new NCC owned residential provision within the county is an important part of the sufficiency strategy as it allows more children and young people to be cared for in our own provision with the potential of staying closer to their birth family connections and support structures.

The sufficiency strategy should be seen alongside our continuous improvement plan and our corporate parenting strategy and action plan.

Implications

Policy	Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24
Finance and value for money	Capital funds have been agreed corporately in relation to children homes new builds. Revenue for staffing the new builds has been proposed through an invest to save proposal. All budgets are closely monitored to ensure value for money regarding the placements and provision it provides.
Legal	Statutory responsibility as corporate parents Children Act 1989 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021
Procurement	Procurement processes will be followed regarding the awarding of building contractors
Human Resources	HR implications for staffing new residential units
Property	
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	This report is part of the Risk Management systems in place to check on the standards and service provision for looked after children and care leavers
Crime & Disorder	
Customer Consideration	
Carbon reduction	These schemes have been designed to address sustainability as follows. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CO2 Emissions: • High levels of insulation • High levels of airtightness • Good levels of daylight

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior double glazing • Heating and hot water will be provided by an air source heat pump. • LED lighting.
Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the health and wellbeing of our children in care and care leavers
Wards	All

Report Sign Off

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

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Northumberland County Council

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3RD FEBRUARY 2022

ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT

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

Cabinet Member: Cllr Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the Annual Engagement Meeting (AEM) held with Ofsted in October 2021.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. Consider the contents of the report.
2. Identify any areas that need further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Feeling Safe and Cared for priority within the Corporate Plan 2018 – 2021.

Key Issues

1. The AEM this year was held in October 2021 which was within the year time frame of the previous meeting.
2. The discussion considered the self-assessment that is produced and updated on an annual basis which helps to drive the continuous improvement of Children's Services. This report and associated action plan were produced in the Spring of 2021 and considered by FACs in the autumn of 2021.
3. Ofsted considered the self-assessment and the only element of development identified is that they would have preferred that we had provided more performance

data in order that they could better understand impact. We were able to provide up to date data as and when this was requested through the meeting.

4. Whilst we understand that this would help Ofsted understand the context, the assessment is primarily for our use to help us to keep track of progress. Data is used to support the process regularly and the work around meaningful measures means that we have up to date quantitative and qualitative data available at all times.
5. Ofsted considered the work undertaken to strengthen the senior management input and oversight around the Front Door and child protection planning.
6. There was particular interest in our work around Public Law Outline and court proceedings through the pandemic and how we have addressed these.
7. Our Looked After Children numbers and sufficiency planning was discussed in some detail and although they have reported that our Looked After Numbers are higher than the national average, we remain the lowest in the region.
8. Although the focus is on social care, the discussion did cover education recovery and school inspections where the progress at Berwick Academy and the outstanding inspection at Corbridge Middle School were highlighted.
9. The next inspection activity for Northumberland will be a focussed visit which will take place at some point in 2022. The theme of the visit was not discussed.

Background

- Children's Services are heavily regulated, and a report has already been presented to FACS in relation to the variety of inspections and regulatory oversight that takes place.
- The ILACS programme details the frequency and type of inspection that should take place.
- Ofsted hold an Annual Engagement Meeting with all Local Authorities each year and as part of this Local Authorities are asked to provide a self-assessment document or information which analyses where the organisation thinks it is relation to the key areas that Ofsted inspects on. This is not mandatory and there is no requirement for a document to be produced just for Ofsted. We can simply provide what we use to evaluate our strengths and areas for development.
- Northumberland have always had a continuous improvement plan and a format has been developed that is used each year to monitor and evaluate progress which is submitted to Ofsted when required.
- Northumberland welcome feedback from Ofsted and always use this constructively to improve services.

Implications

Policy	All Northumberland Children's Services policies consider the impact of inspections.
Finance and value for money	Local Authorities are expected to pay a contribution to Ofsted on an annual basis.
Legal	Inspections of Children's Services are covered in statute and associated regulations.
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	The recruitment and retention of appropriate staff forms part of the continuous improvement plan.
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The continuous improvement plan applies to all children but in particular those children who are vulnerable.
Risk Assessment	The continuous improvement plan serves as an effective risk assessment.
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	Improving access and quality of our services is the main premise of the continuous improvement plan.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	The wellbeing of staff and the families we work with is at the forefront of the work we do.
Wards	All

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
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

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Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

DATE: 3 FEBRUARY 2022

OFSTED AND INSPECTION FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner-Thompson

Purpose of Report

To inform elected members of the range of inspections and external scrutiny that Ofsted and other inspectorates provide to local authority children services departments.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. To acknowledge the scope of inspections described herein.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Living, Learning and Thriving corporate priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key Issues

- a. Children's Services is the most inspected and regulated department in the local authority.
- b. Ofsted undertakes graded inspections of the following services: early years settings; schools; adult learning; social care: (ie the ILACS) and children's

residential homes.

- c. It also provides external scrutiny in between social care inspections in the form of focused visits which are ungraded.
- d. Ofsted with the Care Quality Commission undertake multi agency inspections in the form of joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) and special educational needs and disabilities inspections (SEND); again these are ungraded.
- e. In addition to inspections from Ofsted, we also receive inspections of the Youth Justice Service coordinated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.
- f. The table in the Background section details Northumberland's current position regarding these inspections and external scrutiny.
- g. Whilst inspections of early years settings and schools are ongoing, it is anticipated that the next activity that the Council's Children's Services will receive in 2022 will be an inspection of the Youth Justice Service and a Focused Visit for Social Care. It is also possible that there will be an Adult Learning inspection in 2022.

Background

The table below details the various types of inspection or external scrutiny that Children's Services experiences, along with the latest position and our estimate of what will happen next. Almost all inspection and regulatory activity in Children's Services is undertaken by Ofsted (the exception being the inspection of Youth Justice Services coordinated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation [HMIP]).

TYPE OF INSPECTION / VISIT		GRADED?	LATEST POSITION	FUTURE
Early Yrs	Childcare / Childminders	Y	97% of providers rated Good or Outstanding compared to 97% nationally	Ongoing
Schools	Primary	Y	92% of primary schools rated Good or Outstanding compared to 88% nationally	Ongoing
	Secondary	Y	70% of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding compared to 76% nationally	
	Special / Pupil Referral Unit	Y	70% of special schools rated Good or Outstanding compared to 90% nationally	
16+	Adult Learning	Y	The Learning & Skills service was graded as Good in 2018	2022 / 2023
SEND	Multi agency inspection	N	Northumberland as an area received a written statement of action (WSOA) in 2018	2023 / 2024
	Multi agency re-visit of the WSOA	N	Northumberland was judged to have made sufficient progress in all areas	Not applicable
Social Care	Inspection of LA Children's Services (ILACS)	Y	Northumberland was judged to be Good across all four areas	2023 / 2024
	Multi agency Joint Targeted Area Inspection	N	Northumberland have received one on child exploitation in 2019. There were no priority areas for action.	Not expected
	Focused Visit	N	Northumberland have received one on its Front Door in 2018. There were no priority areas for action.	Expected in 2022
	Residential homes	Y	There are five settings and two are judged to be Outstanding, two Good and one Requires Improvement	All 5 settings inspected each year
	Youth Justice	Y	Last judged to be Good in 2016 by the HMIP; the next inspection is overdue	Expected in 2022

Ofsted's role is to make sure that organisations providing education, training and care services in England do so to a high standard for children and students. It reports directly to Parliament and is independent and impartial. It is responsible for:

Inspecting

- Maintained schools and academies, some independent schools, and many other educational institutions and programmes outside of higher education
- Childcare, adoption and fostering agencies and initial teacher training

Regulating

A range of early years and children's social care services, making sure they are suitable for children and potentially vulnerable young people. As shown in the table above, inspections of early years settings, schools and residential homes are ongoing and these services are supported by the Council in ensuring they are aware of the requirements of the latest frameworks.

Children's Social Care

Northumberland Children's Social Care was last inspected under the ILACS framework in January 2020 and that took the form of a full standard inspection. It is usually at least another three years before the next such inspection and as Ofsted's approach is to remain in touch with local authorities to "catch before they fall", it is anticipated that the next activity that the Council's Children's Services will receive under this framework will be a Focused Visit at some point in 2022. Focused Visits give the local authority and Ofsted the opportunity to identify what is going well and what needs to improve before the next judgement inspection.

The links to the detailed guidance of how these inspections work are provided in the section on background papers and Appendix A shows an example of the timetable for a focused visit. Focused visits could be on one of the following areas:

- arrangements at the front door
- children in need of help or protection
- extra familial risk
- arrangements for achieving permanency
- meeting the needs of children who are looked after
- arrangements for care leavers
- unregulated or unregistered children's homes

Youth Justice Service

As mentioned in the table above, an inspection of the Youth Justice Service is expected in 2022. The inspection consists of three phases: Phase I: Pre-fieldwork planning and preparation; Phase II: Fieldwork; Phase III: Post-fieldwork. The pre-fieldwork phase normally commences five weeks before the fieldwork with the announcement of the inspection and the issue of documentation to assist planning and preparation. A telephone planning meeting takes place the week following the announcement (normally week -3). For single inspections, there is one week of fieldwork, during which case inspections and meetings take place and for joint inspections, the first fieldwork week comprises case inspections only and it is followed by an off-site review week and then a second fieldwork week comprising the majority of meetings and issues arising out of cases inspected. On completion of the fieldwork phase, the lead and deputy lead inspector prepare draft ratings proposals and summarise evidence and key findings for an internal 'ratings panel' meeting, held the week after fieldwork is completed. The panel ensures that ratings fully reflect the balance of the evidence, and that they are sufficiently consistent across inspections. A summary of the ratings panel decision is sent to the inspected body on the Friday after the meeting has been held and the draft report is then prepared.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Whilst the inspection of SEND in 2018 was not graded, it did result in Northumberland being required to produce a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). The delivery of this was in relation to three areas (Joint Commissioning; Graduated Approach and Outcomes), and was subject to quarterly monitoring by the Department for Education and NHS England. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission re-visited Northumberland in May 2021 to assess progress on the WSOA and concluded there had been sufficient progress in all three areas.

Implications

Policy	The inspection framework is an element of Children's Services performance management and quality assurance arrangements.
Finance and value for money	The inspection framework provides external scrutiny to assess if Children Services is providing good value in meeting the needs of children within the county.
Legal	Elements of the inspection framework review Children Service's legal work in relation to, for example, care proceedings.
Procurement	Not applicable
Human Resources	Workforce development and the sufficiency of skilled and experienced staff are assessed under this inspection framework.
Property	Not applicable
Equalities Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No children or young people could be disadvantaged as a result of this report.
Risk Assessment	Graded inspections and external scrutiny have an element of risk to the local authority's reputation.
Crime & Disorder	The inspection of the Youth Justice Service reviews cases where children or young people have been involved with the criminal justice system.
Customer Consideration	Children and young people are spoken to as part of focused visits and inspections and their views are taken into consideration when forming the findings.
Carbon reduction	Not applicable
Health and Wellbeing	The health and well being of children and young people is an element of the inspection framework. For example, Ofsted requires the local authority to share the local strategy for child and adolescent mental health as part of ILACS inspections and focused visits.
Wards	All

Background Papers

The links to the various inspection frameworks described herein are provided below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif/early-years-inspection-handbook-for-ofsted-registered-provision-for-september-2021>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services>
- <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/05/Youth-Guidance-Manual-External-v5.2-May-2021.pdf>

Report Sign Off

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

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APPENDIX A – EXAMPLE OF A FOCUSED VISIT TIMETABLE

Example day of the week	Activities
Monday	Lead inspector off-site evaluation of evidence
Tuesday	Lead inspector phone call to DCS to announce the focused visit Afternoon 'set-up' telephone conference – lead inspector and DCS (Notification and set up will happen on Tuesday in the previous week, if extra time is needed to support remote inspection activity)
Wednesday	Local authority shares child-level data, information about audits and performance and management information
Thursday and Friday	Full team off-site evaluation of evidence Telephone conference team meeting

Week 2: fieldwork

Example day of the week	Activities
Monday	Off-site evaluation of evidence
Tuesday	Full team on site gathering evidence
Wednesday	Full team on site gathering evidence and providing feedback

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

24 January 2022 - CA

Agenda Item 13

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
Education (Guidance about the cost of School Uniforms) Act 2021

**Northumberland County Council
Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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PRE-SCRUTINY:- School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/2024 Academic Year

Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021

Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) Annual Report

Adult Learning Service Annual Report: Learning and Skills Service

Sufficiency Strategy

Annual pre-scrutiny report on school admissions arrangements. The Committee's comments will be presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 8 February 2022.

To present the education outcomes of Northumberland's looked after children for the academic year 2020 – 2021.

To provide an overview of the work completed by the NSSP undertaken from 2020-2021

The annual report for Learning and Skills Service is provided to report the performance against the Education Inspection Framework; present the work of the Careers Guidance Team and understand the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service. The Learning and Skills Service leads a number of specialist areas and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as training in the workplace.

This report highlights the issues and challenges faced with sufficiency and outlines a detailed strategy which identifies a

	<p>Home Builds Progress</p> <p>Annual Engagement Statement</p> <p>OFSTED Inspection Framework</p>	<p>range of underpinning data and information. The report will outline how the service plans to meet the needs.</p> <p>Summary of the progress and plans including the outcome of the DfE bid for the building of children's new homes</p> <p>Summary of the annual meeting with Ofsted including formal letter from the inspectorate.</p> <p>An overview of the work undertaken by the Schools Improvement Team following the changes to OFSTED inspection framework.</p>
<p>3 March 2022</p>		
<p>Page 193</p>	<p>PRE-SCRUTINY:- Report on Final Decision on Statutory Proposals for Atkinson House</p> <p>Director of Education Annual Report: Key Educational Outcomes (2020-2021 Academic Year)</p> <p>Safeguarding Activity Trend</p>	<p>This report sets out an analysis of the representations (responses) received from interested parties to the statutory proposal published in relation to prescribed changes for Atkinson House Special School in Seghill, a secondary provision for boys with Social, Emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in Northumberland during the four week statutory consultation that began on 13 January and closed on 10 February 2022</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>

	CIS Benchmarking Annual Report	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.
	School Transport Governance Arrangements	Review of the current governance arrangements for school transport providers and staff.
7 April 2022		
Page 194	PRE-SCRUTINY:- Report on Berwick Partnership Organisation	This report sets out the findings of the informal meetings that have taken place with schools in the Berwick Partnership since April 2021 to discuss the organisational issues facing the partnership and to identify potential models of organisation that could address those issues. The results of an informal survey with parents and the wider community in the area served by Berwick Partnership are also included in the report.
	Development of Family Hubs	Update for members on the development and progress of family hubs in Northumberland.
	Annual Report of Principle Social Worker	To advise and update the Scrutiny Committee about the input and work of the Principal Social Worker in 2020/21 and an overview of the quality of practice and development needs of frontline social workers.

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: 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
3	2 September 2021	Schools Forum Role and Decision Making Powers	RESOLVED that the report be noted	No further action
4	2 September 2021	SEND Revisit	RESOLVED that: 1. The information be noted; 2. A regular update be provided to allow the Committee to provide advice and support.	A further update to return to the Committee at a later date.

5	2 September 2021	Peer Review For Care Leavers Service Update	<p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members were assured that there was an action plan to take forward improvements to services for care leavers as part of continuous improvement planning in children's social care; and 2. Members would continue to have an overview of the Northumberland offer for care leavers and understand their role as corporate parents for care leavers. 	A further update to return to the Committee at a later date.
6	2 September 2021	Complaints Annual Report 2020/2021 – Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, And Continuing Health Care Services	RESOLVED that the information be noted.	Report to be split between Adults and Children. Report on Adult's Social Care only to return to the Committee in a year.
7	7 October 2021	Seaton Valley Federation	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 12 October, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments
8	7 October 2021	Proposals for Atkinson House	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 12 October, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments
9	7 October 2021	School Organisation Plan for 2021 – 2024	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that the Committee welcomed the plan and supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 12 October, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments

10	7 October 2021	Education Infrastructure Contribution Policy	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 12 October, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments
11	7 October 2021	Children's Services Self-Assessment	RESOLVED that the information be noted.	A report to be brought on Home Placement Sufficiency.
12	4 November 2021	Performance and Finance Report (Children's Services)	RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.	Further report to be presented in 6 months
13	4 November 2021	Children's Home Placement and Sufficiency	RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.	Full strategy to come to Committee in Jan 22
14	4 November 2021	Social Worker Recruitment and Retention	RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.	No further action
15	4 November 2021	North East Submission to the Care Review	RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted	No further action
16	2 December 2021	Health Education England & NCC Project Choice	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
17	2 December 2021	Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
18	2 December 2021	Northumberland Skills Pathfinder - Curriculum Research	RESOLVED that:	At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the content and general approach of the Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research be noted; 2. the use of the document with internal NCC stakeholder groups be authorised; and 3. that work be undertaken with schools and colleges to embed the knowledge of the Ofsted framework which included the use of a broad and balanced curriculum which was designed to meet the needs of their learners and residents. 	
19	6 January 2022	Relocation of Actkinson house	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 11 January, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
Page 198	6 January 2022	Seaton Valley Federation	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 11 January, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
21	6 January 2022	National Funding Formula and School Funding 2022/23	RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 11 January, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.