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Northumberland County Council

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Date: Wednesday, 23 February 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 MARCH 2022** at **10.00 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

Co-opted Members: 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
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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
- 10)

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 3 February 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 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
11 - 18)

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

5. FINAL DECISION ON THE STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR ATKINSON HOUSE

(Pages
19 - 114)

The Cabinet report sets out an analysis of the representations (responses) received from interested parties during the four-week statutory consultation, which began on 13 January and closed on 10 February 2022, on proposals for Atkinson House Special School, Seghill. Cabinet is asked to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the prescribed changes as set out in the Statutory Proposal for implementation with effect from 1 September 2022. The report is before this Committee for pre-scrutiny and the outcome and comments will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the report on 8 March 2022.

- 6. ANNUAL REPORT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS SERVICE 2020/21** (Pages 115 - 142)
- The annual report overview for Education and Skills Service is provided to committee members to inform and review the education performance across Northumberland in 2020/2; present the work of the central Education and Skills team and review the impact of the work to support continued education challenges throughout the ongoing Covid 19 global pandemic; and inform and review the digital annual report attached to this report.
- 7. SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY TRENDS AND BENCHMARKING REPORT** (Pages 143 - 154)
- The report provides an analysis of trends within the social work activity in responding to safeguarding concerns regarding Northumberland's children and young people; highlighting key indicators of performance, with comparisons to national and regional variations.
- 8. SCHOOL TRANSPORT REVIEW - BRIEFING NOTE** (Pages 155 - 158)
- The briefing note informs the Executive and Families and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny committee of the forthcoming review of the school transport arrangements at Northumberland County Council and requests the Executive officers to review the tasks identified to undertake the review.
- 9. FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2021/22** (Pages 159 - 170)
- Members are asked to review and note the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report.
- 10. URGENT BUSINESS**
- 11. PART II**
- It is expected that matters included in this part of the Agenda will be dealt with in private. Reports referred to are enclosed for members and officers only, coloured pink and marked "Not for Publication".
- 12. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- The Committee is invited to consider passing the following resolution:
- (a) That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) That the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:-

Agenda Items Paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A

- 13** 1 - Information relating to any individual
- 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
- 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

AND the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would adversely affect the authority's ability to conduct its affairs.

13. RDA RELOCATION FROM TRANWELL (PEGASUS CENTRE) TO KIRKLEY HALL CAMPUS (NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE)

To pre-scrutinise a Cabinet report in respect of the above. Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the report on 8 March 2022.

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.

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, 3 February 2022 at 9.00 am.

PRESENT

W Daley (Chair) (in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

C Ball
R Dodd
L Dunn
T Thorne

A Dale
C Dunbar
M Swinburn
A Watson

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

D Lennox

TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

J Sanderson

OFFICERS

C Angus
S Aviston
A Hartwell

A Kingham
L Little
G Reiter
L Spaven
D Street
J Walker

Scrutiny Officer
Head of School Organisation and Resources
Senior Manager - Performance and Systems Support
Service Director - Education and Skills
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Service Director - Children's Social Care
Senior Manager, Specialist Services
Deputy Director of Education
Head of Virtual School

ALSO PRESENT

P Mead

Cabinet Member

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Carr and Renner-Thompson, A Hodgson and P Rickeard.

Ch.'s Initials.....

54 **MINUTES**

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

55 **DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

J Sanderson advised that he had a personal not prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 as he was an employee at Kyoie House where they used restraint.

56 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

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

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

57 **VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

J. Walker, Head of Virtual School provided a detailed introduction to the report outlining the issues which had impacted on the learning of pupils and the interventions put in place to address these challenges. The headlines for 2021 were highlighted including the number of looked after children who had progressed into further education, the improving achievements at KS4 and there being no permanent exclusions for the 13th consecutive year. It remained a priority to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions, mid-year school moves and rates of persistent absence from school.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the following information was provided:-

- Whilst some looked after children who progressed into further education did level 3 qualifications, the vast majority undertook vocational qualifications or a mixture of vocational and academic qualifications.
- All pupils in years 11 and year 6 had been offered 1 to 1 tuition with approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the cohort taking up the offer, ideally everyone would, but it was up to the pupil and school as to whether they wished to do so.
- Continuous work was undertaken with schools and a child to prevent exclusions and to come up with strategies for each individual child, however it was difficult to quantify the level of exclusions this had prevented.
- A huge breadth of work was undertaken in bringing the levels of persistent absence down for looked after children.
- Any children who left care this year had been included in the figures in this report and whilst they might no longer have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place, the schools retained the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding for the remainder of the year and the service still continued to work with the schools and pupils until the

natural conclusion. At present children who had left care were not monitored after that school year, however from September 2022, the Virtual School Head would have a duty to promote the education of any child with a social worker and work was underway to take this forward.

- It was often the most inclusive schools who the service worked with most around exclusions. During the pandemic there had been issues with the way schools had to operate and restrictions put in place with which some children had found it difficult to cope and most exclusions were behaviour related.
- The priorities for the improvement in the service were identified in the Improvement Plan and the service had governance through the Multi Agency Local After Partnership (MALAP) who were the governing body for the virtual school and who in turn reported to the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Group who held the service to account throughout the year. A report could be brought back at any time to this Committee on how progress was being made.
- The virtual school were very good at getting young people into further education, training and employment with only 3 young people NEET in September, however the challenge was in keeping the young people on a 2 year A level course as day to contact was lost with the young person and they encountered different challenges. There were 2 Careers Guidance Officers who worked with NAS to support the young people in their post 16 pathway plans and to monitor them through their Social Workers to see if they required support. This work was undertaken with other partners through the E Clinic to track those who were felt to be at risk in dropping out of Education, Employment or Training (EET), and some improvement in the level of young people in EET would like to be achieved.
- It had been the ambition for a number of years for all schools and all staff within the schools to understand the needs of looked after children, the majority of whom have experienced neglect, have attachment issues and all have experienced trauma in their lives. This was being undertaken through the THRIVE Attachment Programme which was offered free from the virtual school through PP+ which was very popular and was having an impact. Going forward criteria for schools was being developed to target all children who need help, not just looked after children.

Members welcomed and commended the report and it was requested that if possible all Members of Council be provided with a copy as they all had a corporate responsibility for looked after children in Northumberland. The work undertaken by the Team in having a positive effect on the lives and futures of these children was recognised with the Committee thanking all involved.

Officers appreciated the positive comments received advising that the virtual school was a real strength for the Council working across all services to help provide stability for looked after children. The Virtual School was also continuing to develop opportunities for care leavers across all Directorates within the Council to continue their education and training, with corporate parenting a key priority for the Council. Part of the strategy was also to work with private industry and a lot

of work had been undertaken already in respect of this which would be outlined in the Annual Learning and Skills Report on the agenda and in the Annual Report from the Director of Education at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the education achievements of looked after children and the ongoing challenges caused by the disruption to education during the pandemic be noted.

58 **SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS FOR THE 2023/2024 ACADEMIC YEAR**

S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources provided an introduction to the Cabinet report which advised 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.

Members were advised that only two responses had been received within the consultation period from the governing bodies of Pegswood Primary and Seaton Delaval First School stating that they supported the proposals to reduce the Planned Admission Number (PAN) at their respective schools. These reductions were as a result of parents choosing alternative schools for their children after expansion of the schools following an expected increase in pupil numbers.

Following a question in relation to Academies, it was clarified that Academies were their own admission authorities and whilst some used the Council's admission policy others made their own arrangements. The Local Authority were consulted on these alternative policies and did try to influence where possible, but acknowledged these anomalies did cause some turbulence in the system and the Local Authority continued to work with Academies to ensure that policies met the needs of their local communities.

The School Organisation Plan set out how numbers were monitored and predicted from new house building and birth rate and where places needed to be expanded due to bulges in numbers and the need for increased capacity in schools. This was monitored on a six monthly basis and funding was also set out in the School Organisation Plan with a policy now in place for S106 funding from new house building.

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

59 **NORTHUMBERLAND STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN NORTHUMBERLAND**

P Mead, Independent Chair and Scrutineer of the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) provided a comprehensive introduction to the report, advising of the details which must be included in the annual report and stating that a young peoples and children's version had also been produced.

In respect of a concern in relation to the correlation of the high and increasing

levels of poverty within the South East area of the County and rising number of child protection interventions Members were advised that information provided as part of the performance reports produced for the Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting Group gave details of home addresses of the children who became looked after. As part of the current independent national review being undertaken in respect of children's social care the North East Directors of Children's Services had responded advising of the impact of poverty on families trying to access services and the tensions and pressures that brought. There was a range of early help available and preventative services were targeted in areas of increased deprivation. There was very specific legal criteria which must be met for children to become looked after in relation to safeguarding and risk of harm and these were assessed individually. It was stressed that whilst poverty did impact on parents' ability to look after a child, children who experienced neglect came from all areas and were not just restricted to socially deprived areas and similarly children from such areas also experienced happy and safe childhoods. It was thought that the increase in engagement in the West locality was possibly due to the virtual delivery making it more accessible for those in more remote areas. Reference was made to the Marmot Report of 2010 and the subsequent Marmot Review – 10 years on published in 2020 as suggested reading material for Members of the Committee.

It was felt that the increasing pressures families were under due to the pandemic and poverty had led to the increasing number of children being referred due to neglect in the North East. The importance of raising the public knowledge of safeguarding and the duty placed on everyone for the safety of children was highlighted with information provided on how to identify signs of abuse etc. Information would be requested to be provided on the number of children who have accessed the virtual youth clubs, if they were able to provide 1 to 1 contact and how they were publicised.

Members welcomed the report and thanked P Mead for her report and attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

60 **ANNUAL REPORT FOR LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE 2020/21**

A Kingham, Service Director, Education and Skills provided an introduction to the comprehensive annual report which highlighted the performance during the academic year 2020/21. The report also presented the work of the Careers Guidance Team and provided an understanding of the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service.

The importance of ensuring that every person was able to identify their skills, access the right programme of learning for them and progress into employment that they enjoyed was highlighted. Work was being carried out in conjunction with industries and businesses of all sizes to ensure that skill shortages could be addressed and the appropriate training courses provided, with suitable work placements available for students. A transformation of the service was underway with more training related to outcomes and changes to the courses on offer with the ambition that more students access their next steps within Northumberland. The development of own business and entrepreneurial skills was only at an embryonic stage at the current time but was a priority moving forward and further

information would be provided on this in the future.

The Office for Students collected information on the retention and destination of graduates and whether they used the degree that they were awarded and a report would be collated to provide this information in the context of how these routes could be developed within Northumberland. Development was in the very early stages regarding routes using sponsorship and using the apprenticeship levy.

To address the current shortages and health and social care, supported internships were provided by the Health Service on a full year carousel basis which allowed experience to be gained within the different services and opportunities found for employment within the sector with a new training centre being opened in Cramlington. A programme had also been developed across the County with North of Tyne funding for care leavers to gain experience of working in the health sector. Health sector uniforms were also being provided to primary schools introducing the world of work to children at an early age and providing a link between learning and earning.

The excellent report was welcomed by the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the annual report be noted.
2. The approach to developing the Northumberland curriculum models to enhance the learning experience and support students to acquire the skills and knowledge to be successful in life be endorsed.
3. The performance given the continuing challenges of the global pandemic against operating circumstances and the valuable support provided to all learners with all services be recognised.
4. The progress in respect of the improvement actions set out in the 2019/20 report be noted.
5. The identified areas for improvement and the routines established to monitor progress be agreed.

A short recess was held at this point and the meeting recommenced at 11.35 pm.

61 **CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2022 - 24**

The report which outlined the key issues and challenges in relation to placement sufficiency for children in care was presented by L Spaven, Senior Manager, Residential and Family Placement Service. The Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022-24 set out the Council's approach to meeting its responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care and care leavers, identifying appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high quality placements and associated support. This report was also linked to the next report on the agenda in relation to Children's Home Build Progress which sought to increase the number of residential placements available within Northumberland.

It was clarified that comprehensive data was available in relation to the increased number of children entering care with details provided through the Safeguarding

and Corporate Parenting Group, however it was likely that this was within the NE24 postcode as a lot of work was focussed around that geographical area. An audit/analysis undertaken of children entering care had not identified a specific trend as to why there had been a gradual increase in numbers within the 5 – 9 age group. The use of the Local Area Councils to promote foster caring was once again suggested.

The additional residential placements currently being developed were not for children with specific health needs or disabilities. The only residential unit which was set up as a business was the secure unit at Kyloe House which was for national use but was run by Northumberland County Council. All in-house capacity for residential placements including the proposed new build and the extension to the existing residential home would be utilised by children from Northumberland as in-house provision had been found to be of better quality and provided more stability. Atkinson House was a separate provision to residential care and the proposals for its relocation and rebranding would increase the number of school places for children with social, emotional and mental health needs within the County in line with the Council's priority to meet these needs closer to home.

There remained a challenge with emergency placements where children or young people came into care or there had been a breakdown of their placement after all alternative regular provision had been explored and there was a need for a bespoke package. This had only ever been done when there were no alternatives and for the shortest period of time until regular provision could be arranged. There had been no bespoke placements for children under 16 this financial year.

The Officers and teams were thanked for their continuing work in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy be noted.

62 **CHILDREN'S HOMES BUILD PROGRESS**

An introduction and discussion of the progress on the building of the children's home had been undertaken as part of the previous item on the agenda.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

63 **ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT**

The report provided an overview of the Annual Engagement Meeting held with Ofsted in October 2021 and was presented by G Reiter, Service Director, Children's Social Care.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

64 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

In line with Standing Orders and as the meeting approached the three hour limit it was proposed by Councillor Swinburn, seconded by Councillor Dunbar and agreed that Standing Orders be suspended and the meeting continue.

65 **OFSTED AND INSPECTION FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

A Hartwell, Senior Manager - Performance and Systems Support presented the report which provided an overview of the range of inspections and external scrutiny that Ofsted and other inspectorates provided to local authority children's services departments.

The Chair commented on the fantastic staff involved and provided assurance that the correct checks and balances were in place, of which this Committee was a part of. Officers advised that they appreciated the challenge provided which had led to supportive actions being taken.

In response to a question it was confirmed that Ofsted had not undertaken Children's Social Care inspections and had amended visits to children's home inspections during the pandemic, however these were now being undertaken with some elements still taking place virtually. Some schools had deferred visits from Ofsted due to Covid, sickness levels and also recent storm events where some schooling was still being undertaken virtually.

The Chair highlighted the feedback from the Ofsted inspection undertaken in 2020 which had been rated as Good which had been due to the actions taken to strengthen the role of this Committee and the work undertaken by both D Lally, Chief Executive and C McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Children's Services and Adults Social Care along with other officers. Councillor Dale also highlighted the strong interest Councillor Daley had taken in Children's Services which had also contributed.

RESOLVED that the information and range of inspections be noted.

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

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.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that all Members had been invited to attend the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 7 February where the budget would be discussed. Councillor Ball questioned if the papers she had received on the budget had been updated as these contained reductions to Children's Services which it had been commented earlier in the meeting that there were none.

The Chair advised that the Leader would be attending along with other partners an Inequality Summit on 4 March 2022.

In response to a question from Councillor Swinburn on the safe School Streets initiative pilot and if this was now policy or being rolled out across the County, the Chair advised that this would be investigated and it might be that a report be brought back to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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Forward Plan

FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS MARCH TO JUNE 2022

| DECISION | PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE | CABINET DATE |
|---|------------------------|--------------|
| <p>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021</p> <p>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)</p> | CSEG 7 March 2022 | 8 March 2022 |
| <p>Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of December 2021</p> <p>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>Final Decision on statutory proposals for Atkinson House</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</p> | FACS 3 March 2022 | 8 March 2022 |

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| <p>on 10 February 2022.</p> <p>Cabinet will be required to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the prescribed changes set out in the Statutory Proposal for implementation with effect from 1 September 2022.</p> <p>(G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)</p> | | |
| <p>Household Support Fund Update</p> <p>This briefing paper provides an update of Northumberland County Council's progress for delivery of the DWP Household Support Fund (HSF) for the period 06th October 31st December 2022 and the initial MI report submitted to DWP on 21/01/2022.</p> <p>(G. Wearmouth/M. Taylor/P. Brooks - 07770981864)</p> | <p>CSEG 7 March 2022</p> | <p>8 March 2022</p> |
| <p>RDA relocation from Tranwell (Pegasus Centre) to Kirkley Hall Campus (Northumberland College)</p> <p>To summarise an evidence-based cost proposal to prepare Kirkley Hall equestrian area in readiness to accept Morpeth Group RDA as a base for their ongoing operation.</p> <p>(Confidential report)</p> <p>(G. Renner Thompson/ N. Dorward - 07811 020 806)</p> | <p>FACS 3 March 2022</p> | <p>8 March 2022</p> |
| <p>Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>To seek approval to formally 'make' the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent</p> | | <p>8 March 2022</p> |

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| <p>examination in October 2021 . A local referendum held in the Parish of Longframlington on 20th January 2022 returned a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council is now obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations.</p> <p>(C. Horncastle/Chris Anderson 07966 329338)</p> | | |
| <p>Development of the Potland Burn Biodiversity Net Gain Site A report setting out the expenditure required for the creation and management of new habitats at Potland Burn former surface mine to provide biodiversity net gain for Britishvolt, and setting out likely net gain requirements for future inward investment such as for supply chain companies associated with Britishvolt. (C. Horncastle/D. Feige - 01670 622653)</p> | TBC | 8 March 2022 |
| <p>Climate Change Update To update on progress against the climate change action plan 2021-23 and next steps (G. Sanderson/M. Baker - 07957 385638)</p> | C&P 2 March 2022 | 8 March 2022 |
| <p>Adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) To present the Inspectors' Report into the independent examination of the Northumberland Local Plan and to seek Cabinet's approval to recommend that the Council approve</p> | | 29 March 2022 Council 30 March 2022 |

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| <p>the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016-2036), including the Policies Map, as amended by main modifications and additional minor changes, following its Independent Examination by the Planning Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State. (C. Horncastle/ Joan Sanderson (01670 623626))</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 - Next steps <p>(W. Ploszaj/S. McNaughton 07827 873139)</p> | <p>CSEG 11 April 2022</p> | <p>12 April 2022</p> |
| <p>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. Cabinet is also asked to permit the initiation of a further period of informal consultation with stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership schools to establish whether</p> | <p>FACS 7 April 2022</p> | <p>12 April 2022</p> |

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| <p>any models of organisation that may be brought forward at a later date for consultation should consist of only 3-tier models of organisation or include 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) models of education. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 622281)</p> | | |
| <p>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 regards to a statutory transport plan including the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Cabinet is asked to approve prior to the Enhanced Plan and Scheme(s) being submitted to Central Government by 30th April 2022. (W. Ploszaj/R. O'Farrell/H. Lancaster – 01670 623323)</p> | C&P 6 April 2022 | 12 April 2022 |
| <p>English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) Reimbursement Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, at the behest of the Department of Transport (DfT) and the Cabinet Office, NCC have continued to reimburse bus operators at pre Covid levels in respect of concessionary travel reimbursement. DfT have now advised transport authorities to revert to reimbursing concessionary travel based on actual usage with effect from the 1st April 2022, albeit with a phased approach to the reduction of payments during the early part of the 2022/23 financial year. This report will seek endorsement to implement the DfT recommended approach. (W. Ploszaj/ N. Easton - 07979 233477)</p> | | 12 April 2022 |

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| <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> | | 12 April 2022 |
| <p>Procurement of Specialist Dementia Service The report will seek approval for funding of a Specialist Dementia Service. Cost of the service is approximately £967,000 per year. The costs will be shared with the NHS and come from within existing resource. (W. Pattison/Neil Bradley 01670 622868)</p> | | 12 April 2022 |
| <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> | | 7 June 2022 |
| <p>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of March 2022 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)</p> | 6 June 2022 | 7 June 2022 |

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| <p>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</p> <p>The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2022-23 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p> | 12 September 2022 | 13 September 2022 |

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Northumberland County Council

CABINET

Date: 8th March 2022

Final Decision on the Statutory Proposals for Atkinson House

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

Purpose of Report

This report sets out an analysis of the representations (responses) received from interested parties during the four-week statutory consultation, which began on 13 January and closed on 10 February 2022, on proposals for Atkinson House Special School, Seghill, the secondary provision for boys with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) in Northumberland. The published statutory proposal set out the following proposed prescribed changes to the school: -

1. To relocate Atkinson House Special School from its current site in Seghill, Northumberland to the former Richard Coates school site in Ponteland, Northumberland with effect from 1 September 2022;
2. To change the designation of the school from single sex to co-educational with effect from 1 September 2022, thus enabling the enrolment of girls onto the school roll;
3. Increasing the planned pupil places at the school from 80 to 100 with effect from 1 September 2022.

Cabinet is asked to make a final decision on whether or not to approve the prescribed changes as set out in the Statutory Proposal for implementation with effect from 1 September 2022.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note the Council's statutory proposal published on 13 January 2022 to make prescribed changes to Atkinson House Special School to take effect from 1 September 2022, which is attached at Appendix 1 of this report;

2. Note the responses to the Statutory Proposal and the commentary contained within this report.
3. In the light of all the information provided in this report and taking into account the Statutory Guidance from the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Statutory Guidance for proposers and decision-makers: 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools attached at Appendix 2, approve for implementation the following prescribed alterations to Atkinson House Special School as set out in the statutory proposal:

- **Change in number of pupils in a special school**

The current number of planned pupil places at Atkinson House School is 80. The proposed number of planned pupil places is 100 to take effect from 1 September 2022.

- **Change from single sex school to co-educational**

Atkinson House School currently has provision for boys aged 11 to 16. It is proposed that the school becomes co-educational i.e., admits boys and girls aged 11 to 16, the change to take effect from 1 September 2022.

- **Transfer to a new site**

In order to facilitate the above proposals, transfer the site of Atkinson House School from its current site at Seghill, Northumberland to a new site at the former Richard Coates site in Ponteland, Northumberland, to take effect from 1 September 2022:

The above prescribed alterations were published under Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

4. Note the increase of £122k to meet the Home to School transport costs of this proposal, this increase can be met through the £1m growth in the home to school transport budget. Also note the implications for Home to School Transport of the statutory proposal as set out in para. 28 of the report.
5. Allocate £5.5m from the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan to accommodate the capital costs as set out in para. 32 necessary to support the implementation of the prescribed changes set out in Recommendation 3 above.
6. Approve the implementation of the proposed building solution set out in para. 32 of this report.

All of the above conditional upon:

- € the granting of planning permission by 31 August 2022 in relation to the proposed building works;

Link to Corporate Plan

These proposals are most closely linked to the Council's priority for Learning (achieving and realising potential, but it is also strongly linked with the priority for Connecting (having access to the things you need).

Key Issues

1. At its 11 January 2022 meeting, Cabinet approved the publication of a statutory proposal on 13 January 2022 setting out prescribed changes to Atkinson House proposed to take effect from 1 September 2022. This decision was made following the six-week informal consultation on the proposed changes for the school that took place between 13 October 2021 and closed on 1 December 2021 (all during school term-time).
2. The rationale for the proposal and the outcomes of the informal consultation are set out in the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services Report of 11 January 2022, included in the Background Papers to this report. A summary of the informal consultation is provided at paras. 8-13 of this report. This statutory proposal is not related to any other proposals.
3. The statutory proposal was published on the Council's website and a brief notice placed in the Morpeth Herald on 13 January 2022 in line with statutory guidance set out in the DfE's 'Statutory Guidance for proposers and decision-makers: 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools attached at Appendix 2. Copies of the statutory proposal were sent to the required interested parties set out in the guidance within one week of the publication. The publication of the statutory proposal opened a 4-week period of formal statutory consultation that closed at midnight on 10 February 2022. During this time all interested parties were invited to submit comments in the form of written representations, including support of or objections to the proposal by the required deadline of midnight on 10 February 2022 in line with statutory requirements. No meetings on formally published proposals take place during the statutory period.
4. 111 representations were received by the deadline in response to the Statutory Proposal, falling into the following groups:
 - 12 Parents of students on the roll of Atkinson House School
 - 22 Parents of pupils on roll in Ponteland schools and Little Tinklers nursery
 - 26 Staff of Atkinson House School
 - Governing Body of Atkinson House Special School
 - 6 Pele Trust Governance and Leadership related (Directors, Headteacher of Richard Coates CE Primary, 4 Governors of Richard Coates CE Primary School)
 - Newcastle Diocesan Education Board
 - 2 Other education professionals
 - 1 other local authority (Newcastle City Council)
 - Ponteland Town Council
 - 17 Residents of Ponteland
 - 22 respondents did not identify themselves within a specific stakeholder group
5. The representations received have been taken into account by officers when forming the recommendations set out in this report. The main comments and themes submitted by interested parties during the statutory period are set out in paras. 15 to 24 in this report with commentary, while the full representations are included in Appendix 3 as a link from this report.
6. In making their decision, Cabinet are able to:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal (with or without modification) conditional upon the granting of planning permission by 31 August 2022 in relation to the proposed building works at the former Richard Coates site. If Cabinet decide to make a modification to the proposal, this must be made after consultation with the Governing Body of Atkinson House Special School.

Cabinet should note that within the statutory guidance, the decision-maker is recommended to *“not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by the proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school(s).”* Cabinet should also note that the purpose of the statutory consultation was to seek the views of interested parties on a qualitative basis in relation to the robustness of the proposals educationally in order to inform the decision-making process of the Council’s Cabinet. Therefore, it is not the intention that these results are used as a referendum on the proposal. In the light of the rationale for the proposal and in consideration of feedback received during the informal consultation and the statutory period, Cabinet are recommended to approve the proposals.

7. Cabinet should note that the decision on the proposals set out in this report must be made by no later than 10 April 2022 or else must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for a decision. Furthermore, whether or not Cabinet approves the proposals set out in this report, the following bodies have the right to appeal the decision:
 - The Church of England Diocese of Newcastle
 - The Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Atkinson House Special School is a community special school, and Governors therefore do not have rights of appeal to the Schools Adjudicator.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Summary of Rationale and Informal Consultation

8. On 12 October 2021, Cabinet approved the commencement of informal consultation on proposals to relocate Atkinson House Special School to the former Richard Coates building in Ponteland, to change the designation of the school from single sex to co-educational in order to admit girls and to increase the number of planned places at the school from 80 to 100. In line with DfE guidance, a six-week informal consultation commenced on 13 October and closed on 1 December 2021.
9. The rationale for the proposals are detailed in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services of 12 October 2021 and 11 January 2022.

In summary, the rationale for the proposals is:

- The number of children and young people being diagnosed with special educational needs in Northumberland has been increasing year on year for the past 10 years, equating to an average increase in demand for special school places over this period of 7% each year. Demand from parents for their children to be educated within special school provision continues to grow and nationally there are significant

financial pressures on mainstream schools in supporting SEND provision, for example schools fund the first £6k of support for each SEND learner with an EHCP.

- Within these numbers, there has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people who have been identified with a primary special need of autism and/or social emotional and mental health needs. Northumberland has been successful in bidding for a special free school, the Gilbert Ward Academy constructed through the DfE's free school programme for secondary age young people who have autism and social, emotional and mental health needs but this will not be completed until early 2023. The Dales School in Blyth and Ashington and Hillcrest School in Cramlington have also both had their provision increased recently. The next available school to expand to meet demand would be Atkinson House Special School. However, there is also a growing demand for SEMH provision for girls in Northumberland from Year 7 onwards.
 - The delay in the opening of the Gilbert Ward Academy and the increasing demand outlined above evidences the need for additional SEMH places across the county. It is therefore proposed by relocating Atkinson House to the vacant former Richard Coates CE Primary School building in Ponteland, additional capacity would be available on an ongoing basis, rather than spending additional funding on temporary arrangements to meet demand in the interim. The additional capacity at the proposed site for Atkinson House Special School would also enable the school to expand its provision by moving from a single sex provision to co-educational, thus supporting the growing demand from girls diagnosed with SEMH in the county.
10. Informal consultation commenced on 13 October until 1 December 2021, a six-week period in school term-time, which is in line with DfE guidance. In line with all informal consultation, the intention was to gauge the views of all stakeholders but especially those most affected by the proposals, in particular those views of the parents of Atkinson House Special School as the affected school. In short, informal consultation in relation to schools is not a referendum but an opportunity to consider all views and on balance consider what is in the best educational interests of the students most impacted, in this case those of Atkinson House Special School, whilst being mindful of the impact on other parties.
11. A consultation document, including a questionnaire, was drawn up which set out the rationale, background information and implications of the proposal. This document was circulated directly to parents, staff, Governors and other stakeholders. The document was also published on the Council's website, on Twitter and Facebook and a notice highlighting the consultation displayed in the local library at Ponteland. Virtual meetings with key stakeholders took place, and although a public-facing event was not able to take place due to rising COVID cases at the time of the consultation, a 'padlet' containing the proposals and other background information was set up to assist consultees in formulating their views.
12. The full outcomes of the approved informal consultation, analysis and commentary on feedback received from consultees are provided in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services 11 January 2022. In summary, feedback from consultees was as follows:
- The Governing Body of Atkinson House Special School, and the staff, parents and students on role at the school who responded were all in favour of the proposals.

- The Pele Trust and The Newcastle Diocesan Education Board did not support the proposals in the light of their safeguarding concerns in relation to the shared site with Richard Coates CE Primary.
- Little Tinklers nursery, which is also located close to the former Richard Coates building, also discussed concerns about safeguarding during the meeting with NCC officers, although a written response was not received.
- Ponteland Town Council did not support the proposals in the light of their concerns with the location and its potential impact on local schools and residents in relation to increased traffic.
- Of the 2,016 electronic consultation documents sent out directly to consultees, 305 responses were received. Most responses received from stakeholders linked to Atkinson House Special School supported the proposal to relocate, whereas most of the responses received from stakeholders linked to the Pele Trust, Little Tinklers nursery and residents were not in favour of the relocation. The responses for and against the proposal regarding Atkinson House Special School becoming co-educational were closer, with those not in favour slightly ahead of those in favour.

13. In the light of the educational rationale for the proposals, Cabinet approved the publication of the statutory proposal on 13 January 2022 as set out in the Key Issues of this report. However, during the statutory period officers have met with representatives of the Pele Trust to agree safeguarding measures that would be put in place should the proposal be approved for implementation. These are set out in para. 32.

Representations submitted during the statutory period and commentary

14. Following the publication of the statutory proposal, the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services received 111 representations. Table 1 indicates the interested parties from whom representations were received and their response:

Table 1

| Respondent type | Support proposals | Object to proposals |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| • 12 Parents of Atkinson House Special School | 12 | - |
| • Governing Body of Atkinson House Special School | 1 | - |
| • 26 Staff of Atkinson House Special School, including Headteacher of Atkinson House | 26 | - |
| • 22 Parents of schools in Ponteland, including Richard Coates CE Primary School | 1 | 20 |
| | 1 parent submitted comments only – no clear statement in favour of or against the proposal | |
| • Pele Trust Leadership and Governance (Directors response; Headteacher, Richard | - | 5 |

| | | |
|--|---|------------|
| Coates CE Primary School; 3 Governors of Richard Coates CE Primary School | | |
| • Other education professionals | - | 2 |
| • Newcastle City Council | 1 | - |
| • Newcastle Diocesan Education Board | - | 1 |
| • Ponteland Town Council | Comments received only – no clear statement made in favour of or against the proposal | |
| • 17 Ponteland residents | - | 17 |
| • 23 Responses from people who did not identify themselves specifically with a stakeholder group | 2 | 21 |
| Total | 43* | 66* |

**Note: As Ponteland Town Council submitted comments only and did not specifically state they were for or against the proposals, they are not counted in total number 'For' or 'Against'.*

As highlighted at para. 6, Cabinet should note that the purpose of the statutory consultation was to seek the views of interested parties on a qualitative basis in relation to the robustness of the proposals educationally in order to inform the decision-making process of the Council's Cabinet. Therefore, it is not the intention that these results are used as a referendum on the proposal.

Summary of representations, themes arising and commentary

15. Summary of responses from parents of students on roll at Atkinson House Special School:

- Larger site will enable bespoke choices and a tailored curriculum and therapeutic offer;
- The change to co-educational would create positive opportunities for boys and girls to improve interaction, social development and skills, and academic skills;
- Opportunity for girls [with SEMH] to attend a school that best meets their needs;
- A new site will offer better facilities and more rooms for nurturing and customised education;

Commentary

All representations received during the statutory period from the parents of students on roll at Atkinson House support the proposals. It is notable that parents believe that not only the site would be more beneficial to their children, but that they believe the inclusion of girls in the school would improve their son's social and academic skills.

While 12 representations were received from parents/carers of Atkinson House students, Cabinet should note that some Atkinson House student's parents are

unused to responding formally in writing to statutory consultation such as this and are reminded that of the 48 responses received from this group of parents during informal consultation via the online questionnaire, 44 supported the relocation and 39 supported co-education.

16. Summary of Response from Atkinson House Special School Governing Body

- The Governing Body is committed to working in partnership with the LA to ensure we provide the best possible environment and outcomes for our students.
- Governing Body confirms it is fully supportive of the proposed relocation to Ponteland and the transition to provide co-educational provision.
- Subject to formal approval, we look forward to the delivery of a successful project in September 2022 and the proposed future developments at the site to ensure we have a world class leading facility for the young people who require our support.

Commentary

The Governing Body's continuing support of the proposals for the school is noted.

17. Summary of Response from headteacher of Atkinson House Special School

- The Local Authority must support students with additional needs as a priority to enable an inclusive offer;
- The former Richard Coates site offers value for money as it is structurally ready as a school;
- Confident Atkinson House can develop world class facilities for boys and girls across Northumberland with SEMH needs;
- Hope to work with all partners to be creative and inclusive with the right, positive welcoming mindset.

Commentary

The Headteacher of Atkinson House Special School continues to support the rationale for relocating the school and is also confident that the school can adapt to meet the needs of girls as well as boys. Should the proposal be implemented, it is hoped that all partners, would work collaboratively in the best interests of all children and young people.

18. Summary of Responses from staff of Atkinson House Special School

- Atkinson House has the right management structure and expertise to meet the needs of an expanding school.
- Co-education in SEMH setting offers positive opportunities for interaction and social development. Currently no SEMH provision in county for girls.
- Relocation will enable larger number of pupils able to be accommodated to cater for growing numbers and bespoke design choices, so curriculum and therapeutic offer can be better tailored including Modern Foreign Languages and Humanities.
- Atkinson House support and guidance is second to none, exam entries improving year on year.
- Current premises of Atkinson House inadequate/not fit for purpose for much of strategic vision and not best location. Pupils deserve access to provision that meets their needs.

- Larger building will assist pupils in dealing with social situations more effectively.
- Opposition to the proposals stems from fear of unknown and negative stereotypes of our students.
- Want to forge links with wider community and support them to understand the work we do, e.g., learn Atkinson House is not a 'naughty boy school' or other derogatory terms they have called us, but a school for children with special needs and the positive effects we have on their lives daily.
- Space for more 1:1 work where it's needed. Larger school will assist with growing number of students with ASD.
- Staff and students work tirelessly and have outstanding respect, relationships and trust for each other therefore want to offer them the best opportunity to flourish and grow and move forward in the community without prejudice or made to feel different to pupils in 'normal' mainstream settings.

Commentary

The comments of staff support the rationale for the proposal that in order to accommodate the growing number of children and young people in the county with SEMH needs, a larger building for Atkinson House Special School is required. Equally staff support the rationale to offer provision to girls in Northumberland with SEMH needs as there is currently no dedicated provision.

19. Summary of responses from parents in other schools and settings in Ponteland

- Hope this gets the go-ahead, every child deserves an equal chance.
- Traffic issues won't be as bad as when the middle and first school were at the site; parents can use 2 large car parks nearby;
- Concern that traffic and pollution will be increased by relocation of Atkinson House
- Concern younger children in adjacent settings will be exposed to bad language and behaviour;
- The needs of the Atkinson House students should not be met to the detriment of the children in adjacent settings;
- Concerns over safeguarding; Atkinson House students will be able to climb fences; will incidents spill over into other settings; how will safeguarding be achieved?;
- Richard Coates CE Primary will be impacted negatively, numbers already falling and this proposal could mean parents take children out of school
- Understand need for more places for SEMH students, but Ponteland is not the right place, nice quiet village.
- Proposal to use Atkinson House rushed, why not consider other locations e.g., former Hexham Middle site.

Commentary

Most of the representations from parents that oppose the proposals have been submitted by parents of pupils on roll in Richard Coates CE Primary and Little Tinklers nursery as these settings are adjacent to the former Richard Coates building. However, there has been some support of the proposals from a parent of another school in Ponteland who has a child with special educational needs.

Safeguarding of pupils attending Richard Coates CE Primary and Little Tinklers Nursery is the main concern raised by parents of children attending these settings. As this was also a key concern raised during informal consultation, Council officers have met with representatives of the Pele Trust during the statutory period to understand the latter's concerns in more site-specific detail and to formulate solutions that would address these concerns. As a result of the meetings, it is proposed that both schools have their own dedicated site without any sharing of playfields, car parking or external hardstanding areas. Fences that would provide an acoustic barrier, at an appropriate height together with landscaping to provide physical separation between the two schools were favoured by the Trust representatives to address their safeguarding concerns.

As well as the physical changes that can be made to the former Richard Coates site and building to ensure segregation between Atkinson House and Richard Coates Schools, it is envisaged that the headteachers of the schools could work together to implement other safeguarding measures, such as staggering the start and end of the school day at each site. A more detailed summary of the work undertaken between NCC officers and Pele Trust representatives so far is provided at para. 32.

In relation to the impact on traffic should the proposals be approved, it was clarified in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services on 11 January 2022 that all students on roll at Atkinson House Special School are entitled to home to school transport and are currently transported to school in taxis, save 2 students (one of whom lives around the corner from school and the other is given a lift by a parent as they live close by). As most of the students share the taxis, there are currently around 17 taxis arriving on site twice a day; with the increase in planned places proposed for the school this number would increase but it is unlikely to be significant. It should also be noted that secure on site drop off and pick up arrangements will be in place, avoiding the need for any drop off arrangements being required outside of the school site.

As also reported previously, the headteacher of Atkinson House Special School has already agreed to ensure that the taxis transporting his students would enter the top entrance of the site which is not shared with the other settings from the north end of Thornhill Road. This should avoid adding to the congestion that already appears to exist from traffic entering and leaving at the south end of Thornhill Road.

It was also referenced in the previous report that prior to becoming a two-form entry (420 places) primary school, Richard Coates CE Primary was a 480 places middle school on its former site adjacent to Ponteland First School (as it was), which had capacity for 300 pupils. Therefore, prior to reorganisation there were 780 pupils attending the shared site (not including the nursery), with buses transporting many of the Richard Coates pupils. It may be that concerns around this proposal in relation to increased traffic have been made in the light of the previous level of traffic when the school was a middle school; this included 6 buses and mini buses of a size to transport almost 190 students that parked in a layby on Thornhill Road to drop off Richard Coates students, some of which then carried out to Ponteland High School. Additionally, a number of parents transporting their children to Richard Coates by car would have also parked in the area around the school.

Therefore, it is clear that the number of students attending Atkinson House and the way in which they are transported directly onto site in taxis would have far less impact on existing education settings and the local community should the proposal be approved than under the previous organisation of schools. Furthermore, should this proposal not be implemented, the former Richard Coates site would be developed in some way, either by the council to accommodate another service or sold for development, therefore it is inevitable that additional traffic would be generated at the site whatever the redevelopment solution.

In relation to comments suggesting there would be an impact on pupils at Richard Coates CE Primary and Little Tinklers nursery, Cabinet as the decision-maker will consider in the first instance whether the rationale for the proposals for current and future students of Atkinson House Special School under statutory consultation remain appropriate. However, Cabinet will also take into consideration whether there would be a risk of negative impact on other pupils attending schools and settings in the local area should the proposals be implemented, to what extent and whether ameliorating measures could be put in place to overcome such impact. However, with the appropriate safeguarding measures put in place as agreed in meetings with the Pele Trust representatives during the statutory period, set out in detail in para. 32 of this report, these can now be communicated to parents. It is hoped that this will now provide the required reassurance to parents of Richard Coates, Little Tinklers and Atkinson House that their children are safe and secure in their relevant schools should the proposals be implemented. Furthermore, there are no current concerns with the viability of Richard Coates as it remains popular with parents, especially those living out of county; this is evidenced by the fact that applications for places in Reception classes for September 2022 remain at previous levels.

Ponteland Partnership is one of the four partnerships in the county that currently do not have any specialist provision either as a stand-alone special school or as part of a mainstream school. Ponteland is close to excellent road systems that mean it can be easily accessed from all parts of the county. It is therefore unclear why some respondents believe either the Richard Coates site or Ponteland would not be a suitable location for specialist provision compared to other places in the county in relation to its location.

In relation to the proposal being rushed without consideration of other sites, the availability of the former Richard Coates building has presented an opportunity for the expansion of Atkinson House Special School in relation to increasing its planned places and to include provision for girls and for implementation by September 2022 when additional places are required. However, there is a clear rationale behind the proposal to relocate to the former Richard Coates building, as it is based in a fairly central position within the county in relation to Northumberland's population it is in close proximity to excellent road systems. It also offers the opportunity to serve the west of the county more effectively. While the former Hexham Middle School is available, it is significantly further west than Ponteland and would require the majority of Atkinson House students to travel much further on home to school transport. Kirkley Hall site has also been suggested by some respondents to the consultation, as an alternative site but given the site isn't in the ownership of NCC, it wouldn't be possible to consider this as an option.

20. Summary of response from Newcastle City Council

- Agree there is a growing demand for school places for children with special educational needs;
- In recent years there has been increasing demand for specialist places for girls with ASD and SEMH needs;
- Newcastle City Council supports these proposals.

Commentary

Newcastle City Council's comments are noted and support the implementation of the proposals to address the growing need for additional SEND places nationally, as well as in Northumberland.

21. Summary of responses from Pele Trust Directors, Headteacher of Richard Coates CE Primary and Governors of Richard Coates CE Primary – all part of the Pele Trust

Directors comments

- Pele Trust acknowledged the work undertaken by NCC officers with representatives of the trust during the statutory period to understand the concerns of the trust in relation to the proposals and to discuss options for mitigating those concerns.
- However, the Pele Trust Directors continue to believe that the proposals are not acceptable or in the best interests of either Atkinson House Special School or Richard Coates CE Primary for the following reasons:
 - Lack of examples of SEMH secondary provision co-located with primary schools other than Lichfield [Longdon Hall School and Lichfield Cathedral Junior School] supports view that the proposal presents an unusually high level of risk;
 - Inability to share facilities because it would be inappropriate and recommendation for 3m fencing when 1.8m is the norm between schools will create significant concerns for prospective parents visiting Richard Coates.
 - Primary Multi Use Games Area will be reduced significantly and relocated to an area that could cause distractions to Yr6 learning through noise. Work required will cause disruption to daily operation of the primary.
 - The level of mitigations required may undermine aims of Atkinson House leadership team by being 'fenced in' re 3m fences and could be counterproductive.
 - Few schools share sites and NCC has vacant sites that would be more appropriate for SEMH provision.
 - Concerns as a result of parental communication that there will be a detrimental impact on Richard Coates CE Primary as a result of reputational damage impacting on pupil numbers and thus school budget.
 - Nothing has been communicated during the consultation period to allay fears of parents if proposals go ahead, with many suggesting they would remove their children.
 - Pele Trust Directors remain committed to working with NCC in the best interests of all children.

Headteacher of Richard Coates CE Primary comments

- Identifying the former Richard Coates building as a site for the relocation of Atkinson House Special school is just a quick and easy solution and not based on the needs of the school's students as:
 - It is not suitable for students with mobility challenges even operating on the lower floor, no lift and steep access staircases. Accessibility in the 21st century is a basic right and another example of how the site is an easy solution rather than forward thinking given to what is right for students.
 - Complete segregation of Richard Coates CE Primary from Atkinson House Special School and a staggered start for the schools is essential to manage safeguarding.
 - NCC has not shared with parents of Richard Coates or local residents how the model would work in practice.

Governors of Richard Coates CE Primary comments

- A firm undertaking to agree safeguarding provisions with Pele Trust should be included in any agreement. Hope Council reconsiders this proposal at a safer location.
- Little concern shown or understanding of how proposed move will affect Little Tinkler's and Richard Coates and residents on Thornhill Road.
- Safeguarding is paramount – any incident would be serious and impact the guardian.
- Other options such as Kirkley Hall have not been considered.
- Firmly believe many given the responsibility for making the decision may not have exerted the time and energy in considering the documentation provided and concerns eloquently made by Mr McGrane and Mrs Cape.
- Will impact future admissions into Richard Coates CE Primary and Little Tinklers nursery.
- SEMH schools are important, objecting because of proximity to other schools.

Commentary

The acknowledgement of the Pele Trust that NCC officers have been keen to understand their concerns and to suggest mitigation is welcomed. However, the suggestion of the Pele Trust that a lack of examples of co-location of SEMH schools with primary schools supports the view that such an arrangement equates to a high level of risk is unfounded. Indeed, in the light of the numbers of children and young people presenting with special needs of this nature continuing to grow, the Council will look to set this type of integrated approach of specialist provision with mainstream provision as a principle going forward.

Officers have listened to the concerns of Pele Trust and as a result of these meetings plans for the site have been developed to provide total separation between the two schools with the appropriate physical demarcation, as well as operational practices. It is agreed that in the past, schools were constructed as stand-alone buildings. However, in recent years more schools across the country are becoming co-located (e.g., over 35 schools in Northumberland operate on co-located/shared sites), and in the future this is more likely to include co-location and integration of specialist provision with mainstream provision given the continuing rise of children with special educational needs.

The safeguarding measures agreed with the Pele Trust at their meetings with NCC officers, including the suggestion of a 3m high fence, were in response to the concerns raised by the Pele Trust. Furthermore, it is DfE guidance that fences constructed around special schools, should be at a minimum of 2.4m in height to assist with the safeguarding of those students. These meetings are also evidential that the concerns of the schools, parents and residents in relation to safeguarding have been taken seriously and demonstrate an intent to resolve concerns to the satisfaction of all parties.

Should these proposals be approved, this would not result in a 'shared' site arrangement between Atkinson House Special School and Richard Coates CE Primary, rather the two schools would be adjacent with clearly marked boundaries and no shared usage of any facilities – it is envisaged this arrangement would be preferable in any event given the representations received from parents of Richard Coates and Little Tinklers to this statutory consultation. Students of Atkinson House would enter school in their taxis via the top entrance to the building and the gates would be closed once all pupils are on site. Outside space would also be completely separated, with the required fencing and planting in place.

The Pele Trust's concern that there could be a detrimental impact on Richard Coates CE Primary should Atkinson House relocate are noted. As noted in para. 19, with the appropriate safeguarding measures put in place as agreed in meetings with the Pele Trust representatives during the statutory period, as noted above and set out in detail in para. 32 of this report, these can now be communicated to parents. It is hoped that this will now provide the required reassurance to parents of Richard Coates, Little Tinklers and Atkinson House that their children are safe and secure in their relevant schools should the proposals be implemented. Furthermore, there are no current concerns with the viability of Richard Coates as it remains popular with parents, especially those living out of county; this is evidenced by the fact that applications for places in Reception classes for September 2022 remain at previous levels.

In relation to concerns of the suitability of the former Richard Coates building for Atkinson House Special School students, it can be confirmed that only the lower ground of the building would be used by the school. The Council is aware of its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure that the building would be made accessible to people with a disability.

As also stated in para. 19, it is true that the availability of the former Richard Coates building has provided an opportunity for Atkinson House Special School to expand the number of students it can educate and extend its designation to include girls. However, the rationale behind the proposal is based on the location of the building being fairly central to the county in relation to population and with close proximity to excellent networks, and also offering the opportunity to serve the west of the county more effectively. While the Pele Trust Governor suggests that Kirkley Hall for example could be considered, the latter forms part of Northumberland College and is therefore outside of the control of the Council.

22. Summary of response from Newcastle Church of England Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)

- NDEB's request for information in relation to how safeguarding would be implemented at the site has not been fully fulfilled, although we are aware of the meetings between NCC and Pele Trust representatives which we believe have been productive.
- NDEB recognises the growing need for specialist provision and supports the right provision at the most suitable location. Also recognise need for provision for girls.
- Access to all 3 buildings on site is openly linked and difficult to segregate without significant work. NDEB wishes to understand what safeguarding measures would be put in place.
- Sadly, aware from visit of Pele Trust representatives to Atkinson House in November of several concerns, (informal smoking area, inappropriate language and students jumping over walls and to our knowledge concerns remain in place).
- As do not yet understand how safeguarding concerns highlighted would be mitigated, unable to support the proposal as it stands.

Commentary

NDEB's position in relation to the statutory proposal is noted. The specific incidents that were relayed to NDEB by Pele Trust representatives following their visit to Atkinson House and that have caused concern have been taken into consideration when developing the safeguarding mitigations proposed to be put in place at the school should the proposals be approved. These mitigations were agreed with the Pele Trust at the meetings NDEB was made aware of according to their submission and a summary is included at para. 31.

23. Summary of representation from Ponteland Town Council

- Noted that large number of responses from previous [informal] consultation were against the proposal.
- Recognise need for additional provision for children with SEMH needs but proposal seems rushed, and no alternatives considered.
- Comments from PTCs previous response still relevant i.e., concerns around safeguarding, use of shared space, impact on adjacent school.
- Loss of garage facility at Atkinson House Seghill site if move could impact on students.
- Responses from Pele Trust and NDEB concerned safeguarding, need acceptable way forward for all concerned.
- Potential cost of £2.5m noted – why can't this be delayed until Gilbert Ward facility opens in 2023 as may have spare capacity.
- Transport costs will increase; also seek assurance Headteacher of Atkinson House agreement re transport of students onto site is agreed and adopted.
- Hope additional traffic generated would not impact on local residents.
- PTC request reassurance that various issues outlined dealt with prior to the school opening in Ponteland if proposals go ahead.

Commentary

The reasons why the former Richard Coates building would be suitable for Atkinson House subject to relevant suitability works taking place and the need to have SEMH

places available for September 2022 are set out in the Reports of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services of 13 October 2021 and 11 January 2022. A summary of the proposed mitigations agreed at meetings with the Pele Trust representatives during the statutory period in response to their safeguarding concerns is set out in para. 32.

24. Summary of representations from residents and respondents who did not identify specifically with a stakeholder group

- Fully support/welcome move, provision for SEMH never more needed; will enable boys and girls in Northumberland to gain qualifications and skills for success in adulthood.
- Recognise need for provision for SEMH pupils but shouldn't be to detriment of children at other schools; decision rushed; should be at alternative location.
- Solution to use former Richard Coates building too simplistic; consider other sites e.g., Hexham Middle building.
- Decision to change location should be delayed until Gilbert Ward facility opens in 2023;
- Increase in traffic [if Atkinson House relocates] will increase congestion and pollution;
- Safeguarding concerns for children attending Richard Coates Primary and Little Tinklers nursery; how will Atkinson students be contained?
- Increasing intake and moving to co-educational unsettling for pupils, shouldn't happen at the same time.
- Vulnerable adults near school site, not putting "Residents First" concerned about increase in anti-social behaviour.
- Council needs to think about what is best for all pupils.

Commentary

The majority of representations from residents and people who did not specify their interest group share similar concerns around the proposals as parents of children attending Richard Coates and Little Tinklers, namely safeguarding, traffic and understanding need for SEMH places but not in Ponteland – refer to para. 19 commentary.

Some respondents within this group also expressed concern for the wellbeing of vulnerable adults in the residential area close to the school. Para. 31 sets out a summary of how safeguarding issues are proposed to be addressed at the former Richard Coates site should the proposal be approved in order to address concerns raised by the adjacent education settings and the local community. For information, there have been no police incidents in the community involving students of Atkinson House Special School within the last three years under the leadership of the current headteacher.

As stated in para. 19, the availability of the former Richard Coates building has presented an opportunity for the expansion of Atkinson House Special School in relation to increasing its planned places and to include provision for girls and for implementation by September 2022 when additional places are required. However, there is a clear rationale behind the proposal to relocate to the former Richard

Coates building, as it is based in a fairly central position within the county in relation to Northumberland's population it is in close proximity to excellent road systems. It also offers the opportunity to serve the west of the county more effectively. While the former Hexham Middle School is available, it is significantly further west than Ponteland and would require the majority of Atkinson House students to travel much further on home to school transport.

A very small number of respondents in this group support the proposal, echoing the comments of parents of students in Atkinson House Special School and its staff.

Conclusion and recommendation

25. There has been a robust response to the statutory proposal published on 13 January, with 111 representations received from a wide variety of groups.

Educational Rationale

The primary reason for the proposals to relocate Atkinson House Special School is to provide additional spaces for the growing cohort of both boys and girls in Northumberland who are presenting with SEMH, particularly in relation to girls for whom there is currently no dedicated SEMH provision in the county. There is a desire to have this provision in place for September 2022 in light of the delay to the opening of the Gilbert Ward Academy and to uphold the corporate objective to educate our young people as close to their home areas as possible in order to reduce the need for out of county placements that lead to long travel times for students and increased costs.

The relocation to the former Richard Coates site would enable the required growth in provision of SEMH places for all young people in the county with additional space to tailor the existing curriculum to the needs of students and could be in place for September 2022 if approved. The representations received from the parents of students at Atkinson House, the Governing Body of the school, headteacher and the staff who responded all agree that it would be in the best educational interests of the students for these proposals to be implemented.

Para. 26 provides further information in relation to educational standards.

Impact of the proposal

The foremost groups impacted by this proposal are the students of Atkinson House Special School and their parents and carers, as well as the staff of the school who would have to prepare carefully for the relocation should it be approved. However, in the light of their representations it appears they are prepared to accept the work involved in relocation in order for the current cohort of students and future cohorts, including girls, to benefit.

The concerns of the Pele Trust Directors, Headteacher of Richard Coates CE Primary and the Governors of the school, and parents of pupils at this school and Little Tinklers nursery who responded also need to be considered. They have raised a number of safeguarding concerns at both informal consultation and statutory consultation phases. Similar safeguarding concerns have been raised by residents and the group of respondents who did not specifically identify their interest in the proposals. However, as set out in para 13, in the light of these concerns NCC officers

organised meetings with Pele Trust representatives during the statutory period to ascertain the specific reasons for these concerns. At these meetings, a range of safeguarding measures were agreed with the Pele Trust should the proposal be approved for implementation. These are set out in para. 31 and has resulted in there being a plan to have no shared areas between Atkinson House Special School and specific arrangements for fencing and landscaping to provide segregation between the two sites. It is envisaged that this collaborative approach would continue, to address any further concerns should the proposals be approved.

Concerns with an increase in traffic and pollution were highlighted by many of the respondents linked to schools and nursery on Thornhill Road and residents in response to the statutory consultation. Para. 19 sets out how the level of traffic experienced by schools and residents on Thornhill Road prior to reorganisation to the 2-tier system in 2017 was much greater than would be experienced should these proposals be implemented. Furthermore, the headteacher of Atkinson House Special School has also agreed to ensure that taxis transporting students would enter the top entrance to the site at the opposite end of Thornhill Road to the junction mainly used by school traffic generated by parents of pupils attending Richard Coates CE Primary and Little Tinklers nursery.

Conclusion

As noted in para. 6 of this report, Cabinet should note that within the statutory guidance, the decision-maker is recommended to *“not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by the proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school(s).”* Cabinet should also note that the purpose of the statutory consultation was to seek the views of interested parties on a qualitative basis in relation to the robustness of the proposals educationally in order to inform the decision-making process of the Council’s Cabinet. In short, it is not the intention that these results should be used as a referendum on the proposals.

Therefore, in the light of the educational rationale for the proposals, whilst being cognisant of the feedback and concerns of all stakeholders received during the informal consultation and the statutory period, Cabinet are recommended to approve the proposals to be implemented to take effect from 1 September 2022.

Education Standards and diversity of provision

26. As the proposal to relocate Atkinson House Special School to the former Richard Coates site includes a proposal to increase the planned pupil numbers and extend provision to include girls with SEMH, more young people would be able to benefit from the specialist SEMH provision at the school. It is envisaged that this would enable more young people in Northumberland to achieve better outcomes, including the opportunity for more students to take more GCSE qualifications, thus reducing the attainment gap between a disadvantaged group of students and their peers.

The Ponteland Partnership is one of only 4 partnerships of 14 within the county that does not currently operate any specialist provision in any of its educational settings and therefore this proposal would increase the diversity of provision in the area.

Equal Opportunities issues

27. An updated Equalities Impact Assessment is attached to this report at Appendix 4.

Cabinet should note that in formulating its decision with regard to these proposals, it must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them to have due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Community Cohesion

28. Should the proposals be approved for the relocation of Atkinson House Special School to Ponteland, this could open opportunities for other schools in the local area to teach their pupils about young people from different backgrounds and communities within Northumberland which would be to their benefit as members of society.

Furthermore, it is the intention of the Governing Body of Atkinson House Special School to change its name to better reflect their school community and the needs of the pupils.

Transport, Travel and accessibility

29. If the relocation of the school is approved, all current students attending would receive Home to School Transport and would be transported directly onto the school site. This is currently achieved through taxis which carry one or more pupils, save for two students, one of whom lives a few yards from school and the other who is dropped at school by a parent en route to work.

Based on the current cohort of students on roll at the school, the initial cost of home to school transport to Ponteland would increase by just over £122k p.a. the additional costs will be met through the £1m growth in the SEN transport budget for 2022/23. However, the majority of these students are based in the South East of the county and it is expected that over time they would be resident more in the central and west areas of the county and transport costs would consequentially reduce. Given the needs of this group of young people, it is not reasonable to expect that they could travel to school other than on Home to School Transport and therefore it is suggested that any impact on sustainable travel is not relevant to this proposal.

As stated in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services Report 11 January 2022, if the proposal to relocate Atkinson House Special School is not approved there is a potential that given that other special schools in the county are at or near capacity, out of county places would need to be commissioned for students with SEMH for September 2022. Currently the average cost of an out of county placement including transport costs is £10,000 more per annum than the cost of a place with transport in a Northumberland specialist provision.

Implications for students of Atkinson House Special School and timeline

30. If approved to relocate, the school would open in its new building in Ponteland in September 2022. Following the decision, staff would begin a transition period working closely with the students and their families to prepare them for the relocation, including organised visits to the new site.

To aid in the transition, the Governing Body have intimated that they would like to change the name of the school that would reflect the designation of co-educational.

Implications for staff of Atkinson House Special School

31. Should Cabinet approve Atkinson House Special School to change its designation to co-educational, there may be a need to employ additional staff to meet the needs of the additional student numbers and its re-designation as co-educational.

Buildings

32. Safeguarding measures

Following the feedback from public consultation responses during the informal consultation and the engagement with the Pele Trust which highlighted their safeguarding concerns regarding the security of the school site and the interaction between Atkinson House and Richard Coates Primary School pupils and their neighbouring properties, a number of meetings of relevant NCC officers with representatives of the Pele Trust took place during the statutory period as agreed.

The proposed mitigations resulting from those meetings are now able to be set out below. These include the robust designs and safeguarding measures that have been developed by experienced architects and landscape architects to ensure that the former Richard Coates site remains secure and that the concerns raised regarding the interaction between the neighbouring schools/residential properties are appropriately addressed, should the proposals be approved.

These safeguarding measures include:

- Access control to be installed to all external doors.
- Installation of anti-climb acoustic timber fence between Atkinson House School and Richard Coates Primary School play areas.
- Installation of an anti-climb acoustic timber fence between Atkinson House School play area and the neighbouring residential properties.
- Installation of an anti-climb weld mesh fence to taxi drop off/rear staff car park and to the south elevation to contain fire escapes (retaining the existing hedgerow).
- A secure taxi/minibus drop off area for pupils located to the rear of the school building, to allow pupils to enter and leave vehicles within the secure boundary before departing.
- Alteration to the fence line between Richard Coates Primary School and Atkinson House School, to provide a new MUGA for Richard Coates and creating a planted 'buffer zone' between the two schools with mature planting which will assist with acoustics.

- Introduction of a 'buffer zone' between the Atkinson House external play area and neighbouring properties, utilising existing mature trees and planting that sit outside of the school's secure boundary.

The front elevation and landscape of the former Richard Coates building would remain largely unchanged, being used as an entrance for staff, visitors and parents only. Atkinson House Special School students would enter the site at the top entrance of the school via school transport, after which the external gates would be locked. Internally, only the lower floor is planned to be used by Atkinson House Special School and it would be divided into educational zones, that meets the needs and age ranges of the pupils with the installation of access control between zones.

33. Building works and funding

During the formal consultation period work has been undertaken to determine the scope of works required for the relocation of Atkinson House Special School, this has included working with headteacher of Atkinson House to ensure the plans meet the curriculum needs of the students as well as working with Pele Trust representatives to ensure there safeguarding concerns were addressed.

The buildings themselves are in relatively good condition having been an operational school only 12 months prior, although there has been some recent vandalism of the building. The site and buildings also allow for all the needs of the current pupils to be met as well as the opportunity to expand the provision for additional pupils. The school was originally built for nearly 500 pupils and the roll of Atkinson is currently 71 pupils with the potential for this to increase to 100 places over time. The additional capacity will also allow the local authority to look at the potential to collocate other services that support the special educational needs of the pupils attending Atkinson House.

Following more detailed work during the statutory consultation period It is estimated that the capital works required to undertake the relocation will be in the region of c.£5.5m. The budget will be met through the use of existing internal and external grant funding streams and are shown in detail below.

| Description of works | costs |
|--|---------------------|
| Refurbishment of internal ground floor accommodation of the former Richard Coates school, together with external works to provide dedicated play areas, redesigned secure parking and drop off pick area and new fencing to site to provide segregation to safeguard pupils. | £5.5m |
| <i>Total Cost</i> | <i>£5.5m</i> |
| Funding Source | Contribution |
| Council Medium Term Financial Plan (SEN capacity growth) | £2.5m |
| Basic Need Grant | £2.5m |
| Schools Capital Investment programme | £0.5m |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>£5.5m</i> |

It is worth noting that the ex-Richard Coates buildings form part of a Church Supplemental Agreement with Coates Foundation. Separately, the playing fields for the ex-Richard Coates Site (which are owned by the Local Authority) are currently

under a lease to the Pele Trust. The buildings are in the process of being transferred back to the Local Authority following Richard Coates CofE Primary School's move into the adjacent school buildings previously occupied by Ponteland Primary School – a move which has physically taken place but for which the necessary legal agreements remain outstanding. Key to those agreements is the land swap of the freehold interest in the ex-Richard Coates buildings (still owned by the Coates Foundation) with the freehold interest in Ponteland Primary School (owned by the local authority). This land transfer (and associated termination of the Church Supplemental Agreement) can only take place once the Coates Foundation receive the necessary land valuations of each of the sites, and the DfE approval of the land swap has been obtained. In the meantime, it is proposed that the local authority enter into a licence agreement for the ex-Richard Coates buildings in order that construction works can start prior to the formal land swap taking place. DfE and the Local Authority are targeting the end of the spring term for completion of the land swap.

Implementation Plan

34. Should the proposals be approved, Atkinson House School is proposed to relocate to the former Richard Coates site, increase its planned pupil numbers from 80 to 100 and become co-educational with effect from 1 September 2022.

Sport and Recreation

35. It is important for the physical and mental wellbeing of students at Atkinson House Special School that they are able to have access to appropriate sporting facilities.

During the meetings between NCC officers and Pele Trust representatives referenced in para. 32, it was agreed that should the proposals be approved for implementation, the playing field areas used by Atkinson House Special School and Richard Coates CE Primary would be completely segregated so there would be no interaction between pupils in line with the wishes of Pele Trust. To enable the proposed separation of the external recreation areas, Atkinson House Special School would be allocated the existing MUGA pitch at the site, and a new MUGA would be constructed for Richard Coates CE Primary funded by the Council.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Policy: | These proposals are consistent with the Council's corporate priority that all residents should achieve and realise their potential |
| Finance and value for money | <p>Following the design and feasibility works approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 11 January 2022, a budget of £5.5m would be required to undertake the refurbishment works to the Richard Coates buildings and site. The cost of the project will be funded from a contribution of £2.5m from £6,693,625 gross capital allocation for 2022/23 to support Special Educational Needs. A further £2.5m from the Basic need grant from a balance of £7.2m and the remaining £0.5m from the School Capital Improvement Programme (SCIP). No additional funding is required for the capital works.</p> <p>It is expected that transport costs would be likely to increase by around £122k with the cost being funded from the £1m growth in SEN transport budget 2022/23. Due to the relocation and the additional pupils accessing provision at the new site. However, some costs would be offset by some pupils not having to undertake as long journeys to school as currently, while different arrangements for more effective transport of pupils to the new site would be explored should Cabinet approve implementation.</p> |
| Legal | DfE statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers "Making significant changes ('prescribed alternations') to maintained schools, attached at Appendix 2, has been adhered to as part of this informal consultation process. |
| Procurement | Technical advisers and the appointment of a contractor to carry out the refurbishment works has been approved through the use of the NEEPO framework through direct award, due to the timescales required to deliver the project for the start of the academic year September 2022. The service of both teams have been used to develop the budget costs contained within this report. |
| Human Resources: | Should approval be given for Atkinson House to increase its planned pupil numbers and change its designation to co-educational, there may be a need to employ additional staff to meet the needs of the expanded service and the girls who attend. Staff will also be expected to relocate which will result in some staff having longer journeys to work, but some will also have shorter journey's to work. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Property | The former Richard Coates site is in the process of being transferred to NCC as set out in para of the report. |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | An Equalities Impact Assessment has been updated in the light of statutory consultation and is attached at Appendix 4. |
| Risk Assessment | An initial Risk Assessment and risk register has been carried on the construction works in order to develop the budget and programme for the project. |
| Crime & Disorder | This report has considered Section 1 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it |
| Customer Considerations: | The proposal set out in this report is based upon a desire to improve outcomes for a vulnerable group of children and young people and their families in Northumberland. |
| Carbon Reduction | It is not envisaged that the processes set out within this report will have any impact, positive or negative, on carbon reduction. |
| Consultation | This report has been considered by the Executive Director for Adults Social Care and Children's Services and the Member for Children's Services |
| Wards | Seghill with Seaton Delaval Ponteland North |

Background Papers

Report of the Executive Director of Adult and Children's Services, Proposals for Atkinson House School, 13 October 2021

Report of the Executive Director of Adult and Children's Services, Outcomes of consultation on proposals for Atkinson House School, 11 January 2022

Report Sign Off

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Interim Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer | Jan Willis |
| Monitoring Officer/Legal | Suki Binjal |
| Chief Executive | Daljit Lally |
| Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services | Cath McEvoy-Carr |
| Portfolio Holder | Guy Renner-Thompson |

Data Protection Implications

In carrying out the consultation set out in this report, the Council has acted in compliance with Data Protection Act 2018 via the Council's Data Protection Policy

Specifically,

- Data gathered during this consultation process has been dealt with fairly - e.g., the responses from members of the public have been anonymised, whilst those responding within a public role have been identified e.g., Chairs of Governors, Dioceses and so on.
- The data and information gathered during consultation has been used to assist in informing the recommendations set out in this report and will not be used for any other purpose, i.e., it will not be shared with another service area or any third party.
- The data and information gathered has been limited to that which would assist in informing the recommendations set out that will arise from this consultation.

The Council has set out how it deals with information received as part of consultation in the Council's Privacy Notice, at

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Contact/Information.aspx#privacynotices> .

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Statutory Proposal, published 13 January 2022

Appendix 2 - DfE Making Significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools, statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, October 2018

Appendix 3 – Representations received from interested parties during the statutory period 13 January to 10 February 2022 -

[LINK TO RESPONSES](#) [ZOOM TO READ](#)

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment (updated)

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**NOTIFICATION OF STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR ATKINSON HOUSE SCHOOL**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF intends to make the following prescribed alterations to the following school:

**Atkinson House School
Pitt Lane
Front Street
Seghill
Northumberland
NE23 7EB**

Atkinson House School is a Community Special School for boys aged 11 to 16.

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PUPILS IN A SPECIAL SCHOOL

- The current number of planned pupil places at Atkinson House School is 80. The proposed number of planned pupil places is 100 to take effect from 1 September 2022.

CHANGE FROM SINGLE SEX SCHOOL TO CO-EDUCATIONAL

- Atkinson House School currently has provision for boys aged 11 to 16. It is proposed that the school becomes co-educational i.e., admits boys and girls aged 11 to 16, the change to take effect from 1 September 2022.

TRANSFER TO A NEW SITE

In order to facilitate the above proposals, notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Northumberland County Council County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF intends to transfer the site of Atkinson House School from its current site at Seghill, Northumberland to a new site at the following location, the transfer to take effect from 1 September 2022:

**The former Richard Coates CE Primary building
Thornhill Road
Ponteland
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE20 9QB**

Copies of the full Statutory Proposal may be obtained from:

The School Organisation and Resources Team
Education and Skills
Wellbeing and Community Health Services
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

or from the Council's website at

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Schools/Consultations.aspx#schoolconsultations>

Implementation.

- Atkinson House School is proposed to transfer site, increase its planned pupil numbers and become co-educational with effect from 1 September 2022.

Objectives

The objectives of this proposal are to:

- **Change the number of planned pupils at Atkinson House School** - The current planned pupil number is 80 and the proposed planned pupil number is 100. The proposed increase in the planned pupil number is to take effect from 1 September 2022.
- **Change Atkinson House School from a single sex school for boys aged 11 to 16 to a co-educational school for boys and girls aged 11 to 16.** The proposed change in from single sex to co-educational is proposed to take effect from 1 September 2022.
- **Transfer the site of Atkinson House School** - the current site of Atkinson House School is located at Pitt Lane, Front Street, Seghill, Northumberland, NE23 7EB and the proposed site of Atkinson House School is the former Richard Coates CE Primary building, Thornhill Road, Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 9QB to take effect from 1 September 2022.

Reasons for proposal (evidence of demand):

The rationale for the proposal is centred on the premise that the number of children and young people who have been diagnosed as having Autism, Social Emotional and Mental Health needs in Northumberland has been increasing year on year for the past 10 years. This demand for special school places equates to an average increase over this period to date of 7% each year (actual variation from year to year has been between 2% and 12%). There continues to be an increasing demand from parents for their children to be educated within special school provision both in and out of the county.

Northumberland County Council has been successful in bidding for a special free school in Blyth (Gilbert Ward Academy) through the DfE's free school programme for secondary age young people who have autism and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), but this will not be completed until early 2023. Other special schools in the county have increased their provision recently and the next available school to expand to meet demand would be Atkinson House School. There is also a growing demand for SEMH provision for girls in Northumberland from Year 7 onwards, with no specific provision for them currently in the county.

Given the delay in the opening of the Gilbert Ward Academy and the increasing demand for additional SEMH places across the county, it is proposed that relocating Atkinson House to the vacant former Richard Coates CE Primary School building in Ponteland would provide additional capacity on an ongoing basis, rather than a temporary solution. The additional capacity at the proposed site for Atkinson House School would also enable the school to expand its provision by moving from a single sex provision to co-educational, thus supporting the growing demand from girls diagnosed with SEMH.

Furthermore, as additional young people with SEMH needs would be able to be educated within Northumberland, it is expected that one of the main benefits of this proposal would be the ability to educate a vulnerable group of young people within or closer to their home communities in appropriate provision.

Effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions in the area

There would be no educational impact or impact on numbers attending on any of the schools in the Ponteland Schools Partnership as a result of the proposal as none currently have any specialist provision. Atkinson House School has provision for boys with an EHCP specifically for SEMH needs and would expand its provision only to meet the needs of girls with an EHCP specifically for SEMH needs. All students attending Atkinson House School even after it relocates would have an EHCP and would be eligible for free home to school transport.

A number of concerns were raised during the pre-publication (informal) consultation from the Pele Trust (specifically in relation to perceived potential impact on Richard Coates CE Primary) and Little Tinklers Nursery, both of which settings are adjacent to the former Richard Coates building on Thornhill Road, Ponteland. These concerns related on the whole to safeguarding concerns around the potential for younger children to come into contact with or overhear inappropriate language from secondary age students at Atkinson House School.

The Council is mindful of the concerns of the above settings, and also of the desire for Atkinson House School to ensure the safeguarding of its own vulnerable students. Therefore, should this statutory proposal be approved for implementation, Council officers would support the involvement of representatives from all the 3 settings adjacent to one another at Thornhill Road to work collaboratively in developing appropriate safeguarding arrangements for all children and young people attending the settings and for ongoing collaboration and information sharing in order to provide continuing assurance to parents, staff and pupils attending their schools and nursery.

Project Costs and Proposed Implementation

Should this Statutory Proposal be approved for implementation, there would be a need to carry out building works to facilitate changes that would be required for students with SEMH needs. Draft building costs for such capital works at the former Richard Coates site are estimated to be in the region of c.£2.5m. Feasibility and design works approved to take place will provide confirmation of the building costs and these will be presented to the Council's Cabinet when they make a final decision on this proposal in March 2022.

The cost of the project would be funded from the circa £6.7 gross capital allocation for 2022/23 to support Special Educational Needs. As additional young people with SEMH needs would be able to be educated within Northumberland, it is expected that one of the main benefits of this proposal would be the ability to educate a vulnerable group of young people within or closer to their home communities in appropriate provision. However, it is envisaged that savings to the Council's special educational needs funding streams would also be made in the medium to long-term from reductions in the need for out of county placements and associated transport costs, which at the moment are estimated to cost £10,000 per place per annum more than an in-county place.

If approved, the prescribed alterations outlined in this Statutory Proposal would be implemented in one stage with effect from 1 September 2022. Staff of Atkinson House would begin preparing the current students on roll at the school for the relocation over the months leading up to the relocation of the school should the proposal be approved.

Pupil Numbers and Admissions

Atkinson House School

Atkinson House School currently has provision for 80 students and there were 74 on roll as at Autumn 2021. Additional places are required at the school to manage the intake of students entering Year 7 in September 2022 in Northumberland who have SEMH needs.

The age range of the school is 11-16 and currently provides single-sex education to boys only.

All students on roll at Atkinson House School have an Education and Health Care Plan.

Impact on the Community

There were some concerns raised by consultees during the pre-publication (informal) consultation period around the impact of the relocation of Atkinson House School to the former Richard Coates site on the local community, including safeguarding with 3 education settings adjacent to one another, increase in traffic and congestion, anti-social behaviour and the actual need for additional provision for young people with SEMH needs.

Safeguarding and the need for additional provision for students with SEMH needs in Northumberland has been addressed earlier in this notice. With regard to impact on traffic congestion, all current students on roll at Atkinson House School are eligible for home to school transport and would be transported onto and off the school site in organised taxis. Furthermore, the Headteacher of Atkinson House School has already agreed that if the proposal is approved, he would instruct the taxi firms to transport students to enter and leave with students at the top entrance to the site which is not shared with either Richard Coates CE Primary or with Little Tinklers Nursery via the north end of Thornhill Road, thus avoiding the parental traffic arising from the latter settings. This arrangement would ensure that there would be little or no impact on traffic congestion as a result of the relocation of Atkinson House School and would also assist with ameliorating the safeguarding concerns of some consultees.

Given the home to school transport arrangements that would be in place for students attending Atkinson House School, any contact with the local community would be very limited compared to that of students attending other schools in the Ponteland area.

Travel and Transport

All students on roll at Atkinson House are eligible for Home to School Transport and this would continue to be the case should this proposal be approved for implementation and the school relocate to the proposed site of the former Richard Coates building.

There would be some additional home to school transport vehicles (in the form of taxis) as a result of this proposal due to the proposed increase to planned pupil numbers. However, this is not anticipated to represent a significant increase in car use.

Consultation

Although there is no statutory requirement to carry out a pre-publication (informal) consultation on the proposals set out within this statutory proposal, nonetheless a six week period of informal consultation (all during school term-time) was carried out by the Council from 13 October to and 1 December 2021 inclusive which was in line with the latest DfE Guidelines as set out in *'Making Significant Changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools – statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers October 2018'*.

Process

A consultation document, including a questionnaire, was drawn up which set out the rationale, background information and implications of the proposal. This document was circulated directly to 2,016 interested parties as set out in a Consultation Register. The document was also published on the Council's website, on Twitter and Facebook and a notice highlighting the consultation displayed in the local library at Ponteland and was therefore available generally to the wider public. In addition, an online 'padlet' was set up, which held supporting information including the consultation document and frequently asked questions arising from consultees during the actual consultation period and therefore was a useful substitute for a public facing event.

In the interests of safety for staff and the wider public, meetings during the consultation period with the following interested parties were held virtually:

Ponteland Town Council
Atkinson House Governing Body
Atkinson House Staff
Little Tinklers Nursery Manager

Operational meetings were also held with members of the Pele Trust, including members of the Richard Coates CE Primary school local Governing Body.

Outcomes

Notes of the virtual consultation meetings, and all views and responses received during the consultation period are summarised in the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services Report to Cabinet – Outcomes of consultation on proposals for Atkinson House Special School, 11 January 2022 available on the Northumberland County Council website at

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=1400>

Submission of Objections and Comments on Proposals

Within four weeks after the date of publication of the above proposals (**i.e. by midnight on Thursday 10 February 2022**), any person may submit comments, including support or objections to the proposals by sending their written representations to: **The Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF**, or by email to educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk

Signature

Publication Date: 13 January 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cath McEvoy-Carr', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services
Northumberland County Council

**DfE – Making Significant Changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools. statutory
g for proposers and decision-makers**



Department
for Education

Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools

**Statutory guidance for proposers and
decision-makers**

October 2018

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1: Summary

About this guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. This means that recipients must have regard to it when making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that good quality school places can be provided quickly where they are needed; that local authorities (LAs) and governing bodies (GBs) do not take decisions that will have a negative impact on other schools in the area; and that changes can be implemented quickly and effectively where there is a strong case for doing so. In line with these aims it is expected that, where possible, additional new places will only be provided at schools that have an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'. Schools which do not fall within the above categories should only be expanded where there are no other viable options.

A GB, LA or the [Schools Adjudicator](#) must have regard to this guidance when exercising functions under [The School Organisation \(Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations'). It should be read in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 and Schedule 3 of the [Education and Inspections Act \(EIA\) 2006](#) and the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. It also relates to the [Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations](#) and [The School Organisation \(Removal of Foundation, Reduction in the Number of Foundation Governors and Ability of Foundation to Pay Debts\) \(England\) Regulations \(2007\)](#) ('the Removal Regulations').

It is the responsibility of LAs and GBs to ensure that they act in accordance with the relevant legislation when making changes to a maintained school and they are advised to seek independent legal advice where appropriate.

Review date

This guidance will be reviewed in October 2019.

Who is this guidance for?

Those proposing to make changes and making decisions on changes to maintained schools (e.g. GBs, LAs and the Schools Adjudicator), and for information purposes for those affected by a proposal (trustees of the school, diocese or relevant diocesan board, any other relevant faith body, parents etc.).

This guidance is relevant to all categories of maintained schools (as defined in section 20 of the [School Standards and Framework Act \(SSFA\) 1998](#)), unless explicitly stated. It is not relevant to [Pupil Referral Units](#). Separate advice [on making significant changes to an academy](#) and [opening and closing a maintained school](#) is available.

Please refer to the '[Further Information](#)' section for the full website address should you be unable to access documents via the hyperlinks provided.

Terminology

Definitions of common terms used in this guidance:

Schools with a religious character - All schools designated as having a religious character in accordance with the [SSFA](#).

Foundation Trust - For the purpose of this guidance the term 'foundation trust' refers to a foundation complying with the requirements set out in section 23A of the SSFA.

Parent(s) - The Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as including someone who has care of, or legal responsibility for, the child. Therefore, a parent can include, for example, a grandparent, other family member or foster carer if they have care of or responsibility for the child.

Main points

- All proposals for prescribed alterations must follow the processes set out in this guidance.
- Where a LA proposes to expand a school that is eligible for intervention as set out in Section 59 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), they should copy the proposal to the relevant [Regional Schools Commissioner \(RSC\)](#) at the point of publication.
- To enable the department to monitor potentially contentious proposals, the proposer should copy any proposal, which falls within the definitions set out in [part 3](#), to the School Organisation mailbox as soon as it is published schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk.
- LAs and GBs proposing to make a significant change to a school which has been designated as having a religious character should engage the trustees of the school, and in the case of Church schools the diocese or relevant

diocesan board, or any other relevant faith body, where appropriate at the earliest opportunity.

- Where a LA is the decision maker, it must make a decision within a period of two months of the end of the representation period. Where a decision is not made within this time frame, the LA must refer the proposal to the Schools Adjudicator for a decision.
- It is not possible for any school to gain, lose or change religious character through a change of category. Information on the process to be followed is available in the [opening and closing maintained schools guidance](#).
- Once a decision has been made the proposer (GB or LA) must make the necessary changes to the school's record in the department's system [Get Information About Schools](#) (GIAS) by the date the change is implemented.
- Where a school wishes to change their name, the GB will need to amend the Instrument of Government in line with regulation 30 of [The School Governance \(Constitution\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#). Once that is done, either the school or the LA will need to update the school record in the department's GIAS system.

2: Prescribed alteration changes

Enlargement of premises (expansion)

Under section 14 of the [Education Act 1996](#), LAs have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in their areas. The department expects LAs to manage the school estate efficiently and to reduce or find alternative uses for surplus capacity (for example, increasing the provision of early education and childcare) to avoid detriment to schools' educational offer or financial position. LAs are encouraged to consider the use of modular construction solutions for any physical building expansion and to consider all options for the reutilisation of space including via remodelling, amalgamations, or closure where this would be the best course of action.

Where additional places are needed, including where there is a local demand for a particular category of places (for example in schools designated as having a religious character), the LA can propose an enlargement of the capacity¹ of premises.

The statutory process should be followed to enlarge premises as set out in the [Prescribed Alterations Regulations](#) (see [part 5](#)) if:

- the proposed enlargement is permanent (longer than three years) and **would increase the capacity of the school** by:
 - more than 30 pupils; **and**
 - 25% or 200 pupils (whichever is the lesser).
- the proposal involves making permanent any temporary enlargement (which was intended to be in place for no more than three years) that meets the above threshold.

GBs of all categories of mainstream schools and LAs can propose small scale expansions that do not meet the thresholds above without the need to follow the formal statutory process in [part 4](#). In many cases this can be achieved solely by increasing the school's published admissions number² (PAN); please see the [School Admissions Code](#). The thresholds do not, however, apply to special schools. Details of how special schools can increase their intake³ are covered below.

¹ Net capacity as calculated using the DfE Guidance *Assessing the Net Capacity of Schools* (2002).

² All admission authorities must set a published admission number (PAN) for each 'relevant age group' when they determine their admission arrangements. So, if a school has an admissions number of 120 pupils for Year 7, that is its PAN.

³ The number of pupils admitted into the school at a particular time

Examples of when mainstream schools would/would not need to publish 'enlargement' proposals

A secondary school with a capacity of 750 (5 form of entry - 30 pupils per class, 5 year groups) **could** enlarge its premises to add 1 form of entry (30 extra pupils x 5 year groups = increase of 150 pupils) bringing the capacity to 900 pupils, **without** having to publish statutory proposals. Although the increase would be by 'more than 30' pupils, it is less than '200', and also less than '25%' of the current capacity (i.e. by less than 187).

A small primary school with a capacity of 50 **could** enlarge its premises to increase its capacity by up to 29 pupils **without** having to publish statutory proposals, because although it would be more than '25%', it is less than 30.

A school of any size enlarging its premises to enable it to add 300 places **would** need to follow the statutory process as the increase would be **both** 'more than 30' **and** '200' (it may or may not be more than '25%' but that is irrelevant if the 200 threshold would be met).

A primary school with a capacity of 210 enlarging its premises to enable it to add 105 places (1.5 forms of entry 45 x 7 = 315), **would** need to follow the statutory process as the increase would be 'more than 30' and **more than** '25%' (it would be less than 200 but this is irrelevant as the 25% threshold would be met).

The quality of new places created through expansion

We expect LAs to consider a range of performance indicators and financial data, before deciding whether a school should be expanded. Where schools are underperforming, we would not expect them to expand, unless there is a strong case that this would help to raise standards. We expect LAs to create new places in schools that have an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'. If, however, there are no other feasible ways to create new places in the area, the LA should notify their Pupil Places Planning adviser⁴. In cases where there is a proposal to expand a school that is rated inadequate, the LA should also send a copy of the proposal to the [relevant RSC](#) so that they can ensure appropriate intervention strategies are in place.

The table below sets out who can propose an enlargement of premises and what process must be followed:

⁴ Advisers.PPP@education.gov.uk

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community | Enlargement of premises that meets the threshold | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for voluntary or foundation | Enlargement of premises that meets the threshold | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| LA for voluntary and foundation | Enlargement of premises (below the threshold) | Non statutory process | LA | N/A |
| GB of all categories mainstream | Enlargement of premises (below the threshold) | Non statutory process | GB | N/A |

Expansion onto an additional site (or 'satellite sites')

Where proposers seek to expand onto an additional site they will need to ensure that the new provision is genuinely a change to an existing school and not in reality the establishment of a new school. Where a LA decides that a new school is needed to meet basic need, they should refer to the [guidance for opening new schools](#).

Decisions about whether a proposal represents a genuine expansion will need to be taken on a case-by-case basis, but proposers and decision makers will need to consider this non-exhaustive list of factors which are intended to expose the extent to which the new site is integrated with the existing site, and the extent to which it will serve the same community as the existing site:

The reasons for the expansion

- What is the rationale for this approach and this particular site?

Admission and curriculum arrangements

- How will the new site be used (e.g. which age groups/pupils will it serve)?
- What will the admission arrangements be?
- Will there be movement of pupils between sites?

Governance and administration

- How will whole school activities be managed?
- Will staff be employed on contracts to work on both sites? How frequently will they do so?
- What governance, leadership and management arrangements will be put in place to oversee the new site (e.g. will the new site be governed by the same GB and the same school leadership team)?

Physical characteristics of the school

- How will facilities across the two sites be used (e.g. sharing of the facilities and resources available at the two sites, such as playing fields)?
- Is the new site in an area that is easily accessible to the community that the current school serves?

The purpose of considering these factors is to determine the level of integration between the two sites; the more integration, the more likely the change will be considered as an expansion.

LAs should copy any proposal to expand a school onto a satellite site to schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk for monitoring purposes.

Expansion of existing grammar schools

Legislation prohibits the establishment of new grammar schools⁵. Expansion of any existing grammar school onto a satellite site can only happen if the new site is genuinely part of the existing school. Decision-makers must consider the factors listed above when deciding if an expansion is a legitimate enlargement of an existing school.

Changes to the published admissions number (PAN) where an enlargement of premises has not taken place

Admission authorities⁶ must set a PAN for each 'relevant age group' when determining their admission arrangements. If an admission authority of a mainstream school wishes to increase or decrease PAN, without increasing the overall physical

⁵ Except where a grammar school is replacing one of more existing grammar schools

⁶ The LA in the case of community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools or the GB in the case of voluntary aided (VA) and foundation schools

capacity of the buildings, this would be classed as an admissions change, not a prescribed alteration. The statutory process described in this guidance would not need to be followed (please see the [School Admissions Code](#) for further details of the processes admission authorities must follow).

Change in number of pupils in a special school

The School Admissions Code does not apply to special schools. GBs of all categories of special school, and LAs for community special schools, may seek to increase the number of places by following the statutory process in [part 5](#), if the increase is by:

- 10%; or
- 20 pupils (or 5 pupils if the school is a boarding-only school),

(whichever is the smaller number).

The exception to this is where a special school is established in a hospital.

GBs of all categories of special school, and LAs for community special schools, may seek to decrease the number of pupils, by following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

The table below sets out who can propose a change in the number of pupils in a special school and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---|---|-------------------|----------------|---|
| GB foundation special | Increase by 10% or 20 pupils (5 for boarding special) or decrease numbers | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB community special | Increase by 10% or 20 pupils (5 for boarding special) or decrease numbers | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for community special and foundation special | Increase by 10% or 20 pupils (5 for boarding special) | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| LA for foundation special | Increase by 10% or 20 pupils (5 for boarding special) | Statutory process | LA | GB/Trustees |
| LA for community special | Decrease of numbers | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

Change of age range

For changes that are expected to be in place for more than 2 years (as these are considered permanent increases):

LAs can propose:

- a change of age range of up to 2 years (except for adding or removing a sixth form) for voluntary and foundation schools by following the non-statutory process, see [part 4](#).
- a change of age range of 1 year or more for community schools (including the adding or removal of sixth form or nursery provision) and community special schools or alter the upper age limit of a foundation or voluntary school to add sixth form provision by following the statutory process, see [part 5](#).

GBs of foundation and voluntary schools can propose:

- an age range change of up to 2 years (except for adding or removing a sixth form) by following the non-statutory process, see [part 4](#).
- an age range change of 3 years or more (including adding or removing a sixth form) by following the statutory process, see [part 5](#).

Before making such a proposal, the GB should consult with LAs, and where the school is designated as having a religious character the trustees of the school, dioceses or relevant diocesan boards, or any other relevant faith body, to understand the place management needs of the area.

GBs of community schools can propose the alteration of their upper age limit to add sixth form provision following the statutory process, see [part 5](#).

GBs of community special and foundation special schools can propose a change of age range of 1 year or more following the statutory process, see [part 5](#).

Where a proposed age range change would also require an expansion of the school's premises, the LA or GB must also ensure that they act in accordance with the requirements for proposals for the [enlargement of premises](#).

In cases where the age-range of the school has changed, this should be altered on GIAS. For example if the age-range is changed so that the school no longer caters for pupils below compulsory school age, the lower age range of the school would need to be increased so as not to include that age group.

The table below sets out who can propose a change of age range and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|--|---|-----------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper or lower age range of up to 2 years (excluding adding or removing a sixth form) | Non statutory process | LA | NA |
| GB of voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper or lower age range by up to 2 years (excluding adding or removing a sixth form) | Non statutory process | GB | N/A |
| GB of voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper or lower age range by 3 years or more | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| LA for community and community special | Alteration of upper or lower age range by 1 year or more (for community schools including the adding or removal of sixth form or nurse provision) | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB foundation special | Alteration of upper or lower age range by one year or more | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB community special | Alteration of upper or lower age range by one year or more | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for community | Alteration of upper age range so as to add or | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------|---|
| | remove sixth form provision | | | |
| LA for voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper age range so as to add sixth form provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper age range so as to add sixth form provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of community | Alteration of upper age range so as to add sixth form provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of voluntary and foundation | Alteration of upper age range so as to remove sixth form provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |

Adding a sixth form

The department wants to ensure that all temporary (which is anticipated will be in place for no more than 2 years) and permanent provision is of the highest quality and provides genuine value for money. There is a departmental expectation that proposals for the addition of sixth form provision will only be put forward for secondary schools that are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Proposers should also consider the supply of other local post-16 provision in the area and assess if there is a genuine need for the additional provision.

In deciding whether new sixth form provision would be appropriate, proposers and decision makers should consider the following guidelines:

- **Quality:** The quality of pre-16 education must be good or outstanding (as rated by Ofsted) and the school must have a history of positive Progress 8 scores (above 0);
- **Size:** The proposed sixth form will provide at least 200 places and there should be sufficient demand for those places;
- **Subject Breadth:** The proposed sixth form should - either directly or through partnership - offer a minimum of 15 A level subjects. LAs may wish to consider the benefits of delivering a broader A level curriculum through

partnership arrangements with other school sixth forms. Working with others can offer opportunities to:

- Improve choice and attainment for pupils
- Deliver new, improved or more integrated services
- Make efficiency savings through sharing costs
- Develop a stronger, more united voice
- Share knowledge and information.

Schools proposing a partnership arrangement must include evidence of how this will operate on a day-to-day basis, including timetabling and the deployment of staff;

- **Demand:** There should be a clear demand for additional post-16 places in the local area (including evidence of a shortage of post-16 places and a consideration of the quality of Level 3 provision in the area). The proposed sixth form should not create excessive surplus places or have a detrimental effect on other high quality post-16 provision in the local area;
- **Financial viability:** The proposed sixth form should be financially viable (there must be evidence of financial resilience should student numbers fall). The average class size should be at least 15, unless there is a clear educational argument to run smaller classes – for example to build the initial credibility of courses with a view to increasing class size in future.

Not all changes in age range to add a sixth form will necessitate a change to the school's admissions arrangements, for example a school may set up sixth form provision solely for its own pupils. However, if the intention is to also admit external applicants to the sixth form the school will need to adopt a sixth form PAN and may also wish to add academic entry requirements on changing its age-range.

The addition of post-16 provision requires a change of age-range, therefore, where a decision-maker is considering a proposal to add post-16 provision, they should refer to the section on changing an age range.

Closing an additional site

For foundation and voluntary schools that are already operating on a satellite site(s), GBs must follow the statutory process in [part 5](#) if they are proposing the closure of one or more sites, where the main entrance at any of the school's remaining sites is one mile or more from the main entrance of the site which is to be closed. The LA may make such a proposal for a community school following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

The table below sets out who can propose the closure of an additional site and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community | Closure of one or multiple sites | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB voluntary or foundation | Closure of one or multiple sites | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |

Transfer to a new site

Where the main entrance of the proposed new site for a school would be more than two miles from the main entrance of the current school site, or if the proposed new site is within the area of another LA:

- **LAs** can propose the transfer to an entirely new site for community schools, community special schools and maintained nursery schools following the statutory process in [part 5](#).
- **GBs of voluntary, foundation, foundation special and community special** schools can also propose a transfer to a new site following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

The table below sets out who can propose a transfer to a new site and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community, community special and maintained nursery | Transfer to new site | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB voluntary foundation or foundation special | Transfer to new site | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB community special | Transfer to new site | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

Changes of category

GBs of all categories of maintained schools, apart from GBs of foundation special schools, may propose to change category by following the statutory process. The [addition or removal of a foundation](#) is described in [part 6](#). Where GBs are proposing a change of category covering a change in provision (e.g. from mainstream to special school) they are encouraged to seek advice by emailing schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk.

For a proposal to change the category of a school to voluntary-aided, the decision-maker should be satisfied that the GB and/or the foundation are able and willing to meet their financial responsibilities for building work. The decision-maker may wish to consider whether the GB has access to sufficient funds to enable it to meet 10% of its capital expenditure for at least five years from the date of implementation, taking into account anticipated building projects.

Guidance on adding or changing a designated religious character can be found in the [Opening and closing maintained schools](#) guidance.

The table below sets out who can propose a change of category and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|------------------|--|-------------------|----------------|--|
| GB of voluntary | VC to VA VA to VC | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of voluntary | VC or VA to foundation school VC or VA to foundation school and acquire a foundation VC or VA to foundation school, acquire a foundation and majority foundation governors on GB | Statutory process | GB | For proposals at a VA school when decided by the GB: LA CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of foundation | Foundation school to VC or VA | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| GB of foundation | Acquire foundation Acquire a majority of foundation governors on the GB Removal of foundation and/or reduction in majority of foundation governors on GB | Statutory process | GB | N/A |
| GB of community | Community to VC or VA | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of community | Community to foundation school Community to foundation school and acquire foundation Community to foundation school and acquire majority of foundation governors on GB | Statutory process | GB | N/A |
| GB of foundation special | Remove foundation and/or reduce majority of foundation governors on GB | Statutory process | GB | N/A |

Single sex school becoming co-educational (or vice versa)

Proposers can seek to change their school from single sex to co-educational (or vice versa) when they can show that this would better serve their local community. A co-educational school cannot change its nursery or post-16 provision to single sex.

When making a decision, LAs will need to consider the demand for and balance of school places for boys and girls in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#).

The table below sets out who can change a school from single sex to co-educational (or vice versa) and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community or community special | To co-ed or single sex provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of foundation. foundation special or voluntary | To co-ed or single sex provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of community special | To co-ed or single sex provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

Mainstream school: establish/remove/alter special educational needs (SEN) provision

When considering any reorganisation of provision that the LA recognises as reserved for pupils with special educational needs, including that which might lead to children being displaced, proposers will need to demonstrate how the proposed alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for those children.

The table below sets out who can propose to establish, remove or alter SEN provision and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community | Establish, remove or alter SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for voluntary and foundation | Establish or remove SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of foundation | Establish, remove or alter SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------|------------------|---------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| and voluntary | | | | |

Change the types of need catered for by a special school

The table below sets out who can propose a change to the type of need catered for by a special school and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community special | Change designation and categories of SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for foundation special | Change designation and categories of SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of community special | Change designation and categories of SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of foundation special | Change designation and categories of SEN provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |

Boarding provision

The introduction of boarding provision can require the statutory process to be followed (depending on the type of school in question – see table below). LAs and GBs will need to consider how the Prescribed Alterations Regulations apply in conjunction with this guidance and, where there is any doubt, seek independent legal advice, as the department cannot advise on individual cases.

LAs can propose for:

- community schools; the establishment, removal or alteration (decrease by 50 pupils or 50% whichever is the greater) of boarding provision by following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

- community special schools; the establishment, removal or alteration (increase or decrease by 5 places or more where there are both day and boarding places) of boarding provision following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

GBs of voluntary and foundation schools can propose the establishment or increase of boarding provision following the non-statutory process in [part 4](#) and the removal or alteration (decrease by 50 pupils or 50% whichever is the greater) of boarding provision by following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

GBs of special schools can add or remove boarding provision or, where the school makes provision for day and boarding pupils, can increase or decrease boarding provision by five pupils or more following the statutory process in [part 5](#).

The table below sets out who can propose to establish, change or remove boarding provision and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|----------------|---|
| LA for community | Add, remove or change (decrease by 50 pupils or 50% whichever is greater) boarding provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| LA for community special | Add, remove or change (increase or decrease by 5 pupils or more) boarding provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |
| GB of foundation or voluntary | Add boarding provision | Non-statutory process | GB | N/A |
| GB of foundation or voluntary | Remove or change (decrease by 50 pupils or 50% whichever is greater) boarding provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of foundation special | Add, remove or change (increase or decrease by 5 pupils or more) boarding provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of community special | Add, remove or change (increase or decrease by 5 pupils or more) boarding provision | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

In making a decision on a proposal to remove boarding provision from a school, the decision-maker should consider whether there is a state funded boarding school within reasonable distance from the school and whether there are satisfactory alternative boarding arrangements for those currently in the school and those who may need boarding places in the foreseeable future, including the children of service families.

Remove selective admission arrangements at a grammar school

The table below sets out who can propose the removal of selective admission arrangements⁷ and what process must be followed:

| Proposer | Type of proposal | Process | Decision-maker | Right of appeal to the adjudicator |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------|----------------|---|
| GB of voluntary or foundation | Remove selective admission arrangements | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese GB/Trustees |
| GB of community | Remove selective admission arrangements | Statutory process | LA | CofE Diocese RC Diocese |

Amalgamations

The LA and/or GB (depending on school category) can publish a proposal to close one school (or more) and enlarge/change the age range/transfer site (following the statutory process as/when necessary) of an existing school, to accommodate the displaced pupils. The remaining school would retain its original school number, as it is not a new school, even if its phase has changed.

Alternatively, LAs may propose to close all the schools involved and replace them with a new school. For more information, please consult the separate guidance on [opening and closing a maintained school](#).

⁷ In accordance with s.109 (1) of the School Standards and Frameworks Act 1998

3: Contentious proposals

When proposing changes, LA's and GBs should act reasonably, and in line with the principles of public law, to ensure that the changes do not have a negative impact on the education of pupils in the area.

To enable the department to monitor potentially controversial proposals, LAs and GBs should notify schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk of the publication of any proposals which would:

- involve [expansion onto a separate 'satellite' site](#); or
- where objections have been raised that the proposed change could potentially undermine the quality of education in the local area by creating additional places where there is surplus capacity.

4: Changes that can be made outside of the statutory process

LAs and GBs of mainstream maintained schools can make limited changes (see [part 2](#) for the exact detail) to their schools without following a statutory process, including some temporary changes; they are nevertheless required to adhere to the usual principles of public law. They MUST:

- act rationally;
- take into account all relevant and no irrelevant considerations; and
- follow a fair procedure.

The department expects that in making these changes, LAs and GBs will work together and will:

- liaise with the trustees of the school, and in the case of schools designated as having a religious character the diocese or relevant diocesan board, or any other relevant faith body, to ensure that a proposal is aligned with wider place planning/organisational arrangements, and that any necessary consents have been gained;
- not undermine the quality of education provided or the financial viability of other 'good' and 'outstanding' schools in the local area;
- not create additional places in a local planning area where there is already surplus capacity in schools, taking the quality and diversity of the provision into account as well as cross boundary impacts; and
- ensure open and fair consultation with parents, any affected educational institutions in the area (e.g. primary, secondary, special schools, sixth form and FE colleges as required) and other interested parties. The [consultation principles guidance](#) can be referenced for examples of good practice.

Before making any changes GBs should ensure that:

- they have consulted with the LA to ensure the proposal is aligned with local place planning arrangements
- they have secured any necessary funding;
- they have identified suitable accommodation and sites;

- they have secured planning permission and/or agreement on the transfer of land where necessary⁸. The proposal can be approved subject to planning permission being granted;
- they have the consent of the site trustees or other land owner where the land is not owned by the GB;
- where a school is designated as having a religious character, they have the consent of the trustees of the school, the diocese or relevant diocesan board, or any other relevant faith body, where appropriate; and
- the admissions authority is content for the published admissions number (PAN) to be changed where this forms part of expansion plans, in accordance with the School Admissions Code.

Once a decision on the change has been made, the proposer (i.e. LA or GB) is responsible for making arrangements for the necessary changes to be made to the school's record in the department's [GIAS](#) system. These changes must be made no later than the date of implementation for the change and can be input in advance, once a decision is made.

⁸ Including, where necessary, approval from the Secretary of State for change to the use of playing field land under Section 77(1) of the SSFA 1998.

5: Statutory process: prescribed alterations

The statutory process for making prescribed alterations to schools has four stages:

| Stage | Description | Timescale | Comments |
|---------|--|---|--|
| Stage 1 | Publication (statutory proposal/notice) | | |
| Stage 2 | Representation (formal consultation) | Must be 4 weeks | As set out in the 'Prescribed Alterations' regulations |
| Stage 3 | Decision | LA should decide a proposal within 2 months otherwise it will fall to the Schools Adjudicator | Any appeal to the adjudicator must be made within 4 weeks of the decision |
| Stage 4 | Implementation | No prescribed timescale | It must be as specified in the published statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision-maker |

Although there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alteration changes, there is a strong expectation that schools and LAs will consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication, to take into account all relevant considerations. Schools should have the consent of the site trustees and where a school is designated as having a religious character the trustees of the school, the diocese or relevant diocesan board, or any other relevant faith body.

When considering making a prescribed alteration change, it is best practice to take timing into account, for example:

- by holding consultations and public meetings (either formal or informal) during term time, rather than school holidays and, where appropriate, extend the consultation period if it overlaps school holidays etc;
- plan where any public and stakeholder meetings are held to maximise response;
- take into account the admissions cycle for changes that will impact on the school's admission arrangements.

A number of changes can impact admissions necessitating reductions in PAN, new relevant age groups for admission or the adoption of revised admission criteria. Changes to admission arrangements can be made by the admission authority in one of two ways:

- the consultation on changing the admission arrangements (as set out in the [School Admissions Code](#)) takes place sufficiently in advance of a decision on the prescribed alteration so that the change to admissions can be implemented at the same time as the proposals; or
- a variation is sought, where necessary, in view of a major change in circumstances, from the [Schools Adjudicator](#) so that the changes to the admission policy can be implemented at the same time as the prescribed alteration is implemented.

Decision-makers should, so far as is possible, co-ordinate with the admission authority, if different, to ensure they avoid taking decisions that will reduce a PAN or remove a relevant age group for admission after parents have submitted an application for the following September (e.g. 31 October for secondary admissions or 15 January for primary admissions).

Publication

A statutory proposal must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change. [Annex A](#) sets out the minimum that this should include. The proposal should be accessible to all interested parties and should therefore use 'plain English'.

Where the proposal for one change is linked to another, this should be made clear in any notices published. Where a proposal by a LA is 'related' to a proposal by other proposers (e.g. where one school is to be enlarged because another is being closed) a single notice could be published.

The full proposal must be published on a website (e.g. the school or LA's website) along with a statement setting out:

- how copies of the proposal may be obtained;
- that anybody can object to, or comment on, the proposal;
- the date that the representation period ends; and
- the address to which objections or comments should be submitted.

A brief notice (including details on how the full proposal can be accessed e.g. the website address) must be published in a local newspaper. If the proposal is published by a GB then notification must also be posted in a conspicuous place on the school premises and at all of the entrances to the school.

Within one week of the date of publication on the website, the proposer must send a copy of the proposal and the information set out in the paragraph above to:

- the GB/LA (as appropriate);
- the parents of every registered pupil at the school - where the school is a special school;
- if it involves or is likely to affect a school which has been designated as having a religious character:
 - the local Church of England diocese;
 - the local Roman Catholic diocese; or
 - the relevant faith group in relation to the school;
- proposals affecting a special school should go to any LA that has commissioned a place at the school (i.e. all relevant authorities who have made an out of county/borough placement there); and
- any other body or person that the proposer thinks is appropriate e.g. any affected educational institutions in the area.

Within one week of receiving a request for a copy of the proposal, the proposer must send a copy to the person requesting it.

There is no maximum limit on the time between the publication of a proposal and its proposed date of implementation. However, proposers will be expected to show good reason (for example an authority-wide reorganisation) if they propose a timescale longer than three years.

Representation (formal consultation)

The representation period must last for four weeks from the date of the publication. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the LA to be taken into account by the decision-maker. It is also good practice for representations to be forwarded to the proposer to ensure that they are aware of local opinion.

Decision

The LA will be the decision-maker in all cases except where a proposal is 'related' to another proposal that must be decided by the [Schools Adjudicator](#)⁹.

Decision-makers will need to be satisfied that the appropriate fair and open local consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has given full consideration to all the responses received. Decision-makers should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead, they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by a proposal – especially parents of children at the affected school(s).

Decisions must be made within a period of two months of the end of the representation period or they must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

When issuing a decision, the decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with modifications, having consulted the LA and/or GB (as appropriate); or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification – subject to certain conditions¹⁰ (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.

A proposal can be withdrawn by the proposer at any point before a decision is taken. When doing so, the proposer must send written notice to the LA or the GB (as appropriate); or the Schools Adjudicator (if the proposal has been sent to them). A notice must also be placed on the website where the original proposal was published.

Within one week of making a decision the LA must publish their decision and the reasons for it, on the website where the original proposal was published and send copies to:

- the LA (where the Schools Adjudicator is the decision-maker);
- the Schools Adjudicator (where the LA is the decision-maker);

⁹ For example where a change is conditional on the establishment of a new school under section 10 or 11 of EIA 2006 (where the Schools Adjudicator may be the default decision maker).

¹⁰ The prescribed events are those listed in paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.

- the GB/proposers (as appropriate);
- the trustees of the school (if any);
- the local Church of England diocese;
- the local Roman Catholic diocese;
- the parents of every registered pupil at the school – where the school is a special school; and
- any other body that they think is appropriate (e.g. other relevant diocese or diocesan board, faith organisation and any affected educational institutions in the area).

If the [Schools Adjudicator](#) is the decision-maker they must notify the persons above of their decision, together with the reasons, within one week of making the decision. Within one week of receiving this notification the LA must publish the decision, with reasons, on the website where the original proposal was published.

Related proposals

Where proposals appear to be related to other proposals, the decision-maker must consider the related proposals together. A proposal should be regarded as related if its implementation (or non-implementation) would prevent or undermine the effective implementation of another proposal.

Conditional approval

For many types of proposal, decision-makers may make their approval conditional on certain prescribed kinds of events¹¹. The decision-maker must set a date by which the condition should be met but can modify the date if the proposer confirms, before the date expires, that the condition will be met later than originally thought.

The proposer should inform the decision-maker when a condition is met. If a condition is not met by the date specified, the proposal should be referred back to the decision-maker for fresh consideration.

¹¹ Under paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations

Education standards and diversity of provision

Decision-makers should consider the quality and diversity of schools in the relevant area and whether the proposal will meet or affect the needs of parents, raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.

Equal opportunities issues

The decision-maker must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Further information on the considerations can be found on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) website.

Community cohesion

Schools have a key part to play in providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to learn with, from, and about each other; by encouraging through their teaching, an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities. When considering a proposal, the decision-maker should consider its impact on community cohesion. This will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the community served by the school and the views of different groups within the community.

Travel and accessibility

Decision-makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account and the proposed changes should not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups.

The decision-maker should bear in mind that a proposal should not unreasonably extend journey times or increase transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable walking or cycling routes. A proposal should also be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the LA's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

Further information is available in the statutory [Home to school travel and transport guidance](#) for LAs.

Funding

The decision-maker should be satisfied that any necessary funding required to implement the proposal will be available and that all relevant local parties (e.g. trustees of the school, diocese or relevant diocesan board) have given their agreement. A proposal **cannot** be approved conditionally upon funding being made available.

Where proposers are relying on the department as the source of capital funding, there can be no assumption that the approval of a proposal will trigger the release of capital funds from the department, unless the department has previously confirmed in writing that such resources will be available; nor can any allocation 'in principle' be increased. In such circumstances the proposal should be rejected, or consideration deferred until it is clear that the capital necessary to implement the proposal will be provided.

Rights of appeal against a decision

The following bodies may appeal to the Schools Adjudicator against a decision made by a LA decision-maker, within four weeks of the decision being made:

- the local Church of England diocese;
- the local Roman Catholic diocese; and
- the governors and trustees of a foundation, foundation special or voluntary school that is subject to the proposal.

On receipt of an appeal, a LA decision-maker must then send the proposal, representations received and the reasons for their decision to the Schools Adjudicator within one week of receipt. There is no right of appeal on determinations made by the Schools Adjudicator.

Implementation

The proposer must implement a proposal in the form that it was approved, taking into account any modifications made by the decision-maker.

Modification post determination

Proposers can seek modifications from the decision-maker before the approved implementation date. However, proposals cannot be modified to the extent that new proposals are substituted for those that have been published.

Details of the modification must be published on the website where the original proposals were published.

Revocation of proposals

If the proposer no longer wants to implement an approved proposal, they must publish a revocation proposal to be relieved of the duty to implement, as set out in the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.

Land and buildings

Foundation, foundation special or voluntary controlled schools

Where a LA is required to provide a site for a foundation, foundation special or voluntary controlled school, the LA must¹²:

- transfer their interest in the site and in any buildings on the site which are to form part of the school's premises to the trustees of the school, to be held by them on trust for the purposes of the school; or
- if the school has no trustees, to the GB, to be held by that body for the purposes of the school.

In the case of a dispute as to the persons to whom the LA is required to make the transfer, the adjudicator will make a decision.

Voluntary aided schools

Where a LA is required to provide a site for a voluntary aided school, they must transfer their interest in the land to the trustees of the school, and must pay the reasonable costs to the GB in connection with the transfer.

¹² Under paragraph 17 of schedule 3 of the Prescribed Alterations Regulations

School premises and playing fields

Under the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012, all schools maintained by local authorities are required to provide suitable outdoor space in order to enable physical education to be provided to pupils in accordance with the school curriculum; and for pupils to play outside safely.

[Guidelines](#) setting out suggested areas for pitches and games courts are in place although the department has been clear that these are non-statutory.

6: Statutory process: foundation proposals

Changing category to foundation, acquiring a foundation trust and/or acquiring a foundation majority

A 'foundation trust school' is a foundation school with a charitable foundation complying with the requirements set out in SSFA 1998¹³. These include that the foundation trust must have a charitable purpose of advancing education and must promote community cohesion.

The term 'acquire a foundation majority' means acquiring an instrument of government whereby the school's foundation trust has the power to appoint a majority of governors on the GB.

Where a school's GB considers changing category to foundation or acquiring a foundation trust and/or acquiring a foundation majority on the school's GB, the following five-stage statutory process must be followed:

| Stage | Description | Timescale | Comments |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Stage 1 | Initiation | | The GB considers a change of category to foundation/acquisition of a foundation trust/acquisition of a foundation majority |
| Stage 2 | Publication | | Having gained consent where appropriate |
| Stage 3 | Representation (formal consultation) | Must be 4 weeks | As set out in the prescribed alteration regulations. The LA may refer a foundation trust proposal to the Schools Adjudicator during this period if it considers the proposal to have a negative effect on standards at the school |
| Stage 4 | Decision | The GB must decide within 12 months of the date of publication | Unless the LA has referred the proposal to Schools Adjudicator at Stage 3 |
| Stage 5 | Implementation | No prescribed timescale | Must be as specified in the statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision-maker |

¹³ Section 23A

Initiation

For a proposal to change the category of a school to a foundation school, the GB should inform the LA in writing, at least seven days in advance of a meeting, if a motion to consult on a change of category proposal is to be discussed.

Before the GB can publish a proposal to change category from a voluntary school to a foundation school, the existing trustees and whoever appoints the foundation governors must give their consent.

Publication

A statutory proposal must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change. Part 1 of [Schedule 1 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations](#) specifies the information that the statutory proposal must contain. Further details on the publication stage can be found in [Part 5](#).

Representation (formal consultation)

The representation period starts on the date of the publication of the proposal and must last four weeks. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the GB, to be taken into account when the decision is made.

During the representation period, the LA has the power to require the referral of a proposal to acquire a foundation trust/foundation majority to the [Schools Adjudicator](#) for decision, if they consider it will have a negative impact on standards at the school.

The LA does not have this power in respect of a proposal solely to change the category to foundation¹⁴.

Where a proposal is referred to the [Schools Adjudicator](#), the GB must forward any objections or comments it has received to the Schools Adjudicator within one week of the end of the representation period.

¹⁴ However, where such a proposal is related to a proposal to acquire a trust, then the whole set of proposals will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator

Decision

Unless a proposal has been referred to the Schools Adjudicator (as set out above), the GB will be the decision-maker and must make a decision on the proposal within 12 months of the date of publication of the proposal.

Where a proposal to acquire a foundation trust or a foundation majority is linked to a proposal to change category to a foundation school, they will be decided together.

When issuing a decision, the decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with modifications, having consulted the LA;
- approve the proposal with or without modifications but conditional upon:
 - the making of any scheme relating to any charity connected with the school; and
 - the establishment of a foundation¹⁵.

Where the LA has referred a proposal to acquire a foundation trust/foundation majority to the Schools Adjudicator for decision, any related proposal(s) (including a change of category to foundation) will also fall to be decided by the Schools Adjudicator.

Decision-makers should consider the impact of changing category to foundation school, and acquiring or removing a foundation trust on educational standards at the school. In assessing standards at the school, the decision-maker should take account of recent reports from Ofsted and a range of performance data. Recent trends in applications for places at the school (as a measure of popularity) and the local reputation of the school may also be relevant context for a decision.

If a proposal is not considered strong enough to significantly improve standards at a school that requires it, the decision maker should consider rejecting the proposal. Foundation trusts have a duty¹⁶ to promote community cohesion, and decision-makers should carefully consider the foundation trust's plans for partnership working with other schools, agencies or voluntary bodies.

¹⁵ As defined in section 23A of the SSFA 1998

¹⁶ Under section 23A(8) of the SSFA 1998

Foundation schools acquiring a foundation trust

For foundation trust schools the decision-maker should be satisfied that the following criteria are met for the proposal to be approved:

- the proposal is not seeking for a school to alter, acquire, or lose a designated religious character. These alterations cannot be made simply by acquiring a foundation trust;
- the necessary work is underway to establish the foundation trust as a charity and as a corporate body; and
- that none of the foundation trustees are disqualified from exercising the function of foundation trustee, either by virtue of:
 - o disqualifications from working with children or young people;
 - o not having obtained a criminal record check certificate¹⁷;
 - o [Charities Act 2011](#)¹⁸ which disqualify certain persons from acting as charity trustees.

Suitability of partners

Decision-makers will need to be satisfied of the suitability of foundation trust partners and members. They should use their own discretion and judgement in determining on a case-by-case basis whether the reputation of a foundation trust partner is in keeping with the charitable objectives of a foundation trust, or could bring the school into disrepute. However, the decision-maker should make a balanced judgement, considering the suitability and reputation of the current/potential foundation trust.

The following sources may provide information on the history of potential foundation trust partners:

- [The Health and Safety Executive Public Register of Convictions](#)¹⁹
- [The Charity Commission's Register of Charities](#); and
- [The Companies House web check service](#).

¹⁷ Under section 113A of the Police Act 1997

¹⁸ section 178 onwards

¹⁹ Appearance on this database should not automatically disqualify a potential trust member; decision-makers will wish to consider each case on its merits

Within one week of making a decision the GB must publish a copy of the decision (together with reasons) on the website where the original proposal was published and send copies to:

- the LA;
- the local Church of England diocese; and
- the local Roman Catholic diocese.

Where a proposal has been decided by the GB and is to change the category of a VA school to foundation (with or without the acquisition of a foundation trust/foundation majority), the following bodies have the right of appeal to the [Schools Adjudicator](#)²⁰:

- the LA;
- the local Church of England diocese(s); and
- the local Roman Catholic diocese(s).

Conditional approval

For many types of proposal, decision-makers may make their approval conditional on certain prescribed kinds of events²¹. The decision-maker must set a date by which the condition should be met but can modify the date if the proposer confirms, before the date expires, that the condition will be met later than originally thought.

The proposer should inform the decision-maker when a condition is met. If a condition is not met by the date specified, the proposal should be referred back to the decision-maker for fresh consideration.

Implementation

The GB must implement any approved proposal by the approved implementation date, taking into account any modifications made by the decision-maker.

Within one week of implementation, the GB must provide information to the Secretary of State²² about foundation proposals that have been implemented. Copies of the statutory proposals and decision record should be submitted to

²⁰ The specific circumstances in which a referral can be made are prescribed under paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations

²¹ under paragraph 16 of Schedule 1 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations

²² Paragraph 18 of Schedule 1 of the Prescribed Alterations Regulations

schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk in order for the school record to be updated on GIAS.

Modification post determination

Modifications can be made to a proposal by the governing body after determination but before implementation.

Revocation

If the proposer no longer wants to implement an approved proposal they must publish a revocation proposal to be relieved of the duty to implement, as set out in Paragraph 19 of Schedule 1 of the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.

Governance and staffing issues

Schedule 4 of the Prescribed Alterations Regulations provides further information on the requirements about:

- the revision or replacement of the school's instrument of government;
- reconstitution or replacement of the GB;
- current governors continuing in office;
- surplus governors;
- transfer of staff; and
- transitional admission arrangements.

Land transfer issues

Requirements as to land transfers, when a school changes category or acquires a foundation trust, are prescribed in Schedule 5 of the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.

Removing a foundation trust and/or removing a foundation majority

There are five or six statutory stages (depending on the proposal and circumstances) to remove a foundation trust and/or to reduce a foundation majority. It may be triggered in two different ways – either by a majority or a minority of the GB:

| Stage | Description | Timescale | Comments |
|---------|---|---|--|
| Stage 1 | Initiation | | <p>Majority A majority of governors considers publishing a proposal to remove a foundation trust/reduce the number of governors appointed by the foundation.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Minority A minority (of not less than a third of the governors) notify the clerk of the GB of their wish to publish a proposal to remove a foundation trust/reduce the number of governors appointed by the foundation</p> |
| Stage 2 | Land Issues (applicable only to removal of trusts) | If not resolved within 3 months, disputes must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator | In cases of removing foundation trusts, the GB, trustees and the LA must resolve issues related to land and assets before a proposal is published |
| Stage 3 | Consultation | <p>Majority A minimum of 4 weeks is recommended.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Minority No consultation required</p> | Majority It is for the GB to determine the length of consultation |
| Stage 4 | Publication and representation | <p>Majority 6 week representation period.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Minority</p> | |

| Stage | Description | Timescale | Comments |
|---------|----------------|---|---|
| | | Where there are no land or asset issues – publish within 3 months of receipt of notice by GB clerk – followed by a 6-week representation period. Where there are land issues, publish within 1 month of receipt of School Adjudicator’s determination – followed by a 6-week representation period | |
| Stage 5 | Decision | Within 3 months | A proposal initiated by a minority of governors may not be rejected unless at least two-thirds of the GB are in favour of the rejection |
| Stage 6 | Implementation | No prescribed timescale | But must be as specified in the statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision-maker |

Initiation

A proposal for removing a foundation trust and/or removing a foundation majority can be triggered by:

- a) a majority²³ of the GB or a committee deciding to publish a proposal. The decision to publish must be confirmed by the whole GB at a meeting held at least 28 days after the meeting at which the initial decision was made; or
- b) at least one-third²⁴ of the governors requesting in writing to the clerk of the GB, that a proposal be published. No vote of the GB is required as they are obliged to publish a proposal. To prevent on-going challenges

²³ Regulation 4 of the Removal Regulations

²⁴ Regulation 5 of the Removal Regulations

there are a number of prescribed circumstances²⁵ in which there is no obligation to follow the wishes of the minority of governors.

Land and assets (when removing a foundation trust)

Before publishing proposals to remove a foundation trust, the GB must reach agreement with the trustees and LA on issues relating to the school's land and assets. Where such issues remain unresolved within three months of the initial decision (majority) or receipt of notice by the clerk (minority), they must be referred to the [Schools Adjudicator](#) for determination.

On the removal of the foundation trust, all publicly provided land held by the foundation trust for the purposes of the school will transfer to the GB²⁶. Where the land originated from private sources (for example, where land was gifted on trust), the land will transfer to the GB in accordance with a transfer agreement, providing for consideration to be paid by the GB to the foundation trust where appropriate. However, there may be land which has benefited from investment from public funds which remains with the trustees under the transfer agreement.

Alternatively, there may have been investment by trustees in the publicly provided land or from public funding in the land provided by the trustees. In either of these cases, it may be appropriate for either the trustees or the public purse to be compensated. The possibility of stamp duty land tax may also need to be taken into account.

The Schools Adjudicator will announce its determination in writing to both parties.

Consultation

Where a minority of governors initiated the process, this stage does not apply.

Where a majority of governors initiated the process, before publishing a proposal the GB must consult:

- families of pupils at the school;
- teachers and other staff at the school;
- the trustees and, if different, whoever appoints foundation governors;
- the LA;

²⁵ See regulation 5(4) of the Removal Regulations

²⁶ By virtue of regulation 17(1) of the Removal Regulations

- the GBs of any other foundation or foundation special schools maintained by the same LA for which the foundation acts as a foundation;
- any trade unions who represent school staff;
- if the school has been designated as having a religious character, the appropriate diocesan authority or other relevant faith group in relation to the school;
- any other person the GB consider appropriate.

Publication

Where the decision to publish a proposal was made by a majority of governors, the GB at this stage must decide whether to go ahead with publishing the proposal.

Where the decision to publish a proposal was made by a minority of governors and there are no land issues to be determined, the GB must publish the proposal within 3 months of the receipt of the notice by the clerk. If land issues were referred to the [Schools Adjudicator](#), the proposal must be published within 1 month of receipt of its determination.

Proposals to remove a foundation trust or to alter the instrument of government so that foundation governors cease to be the majority of governors must contain the information set out in [The School Organisation \(Removal of Foundation, Reduction in Number of Foundation Governors and Ability of Foundation to Pay Debts\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#). Further details on the publication stage can be found in [Part 5](#).

At the same time as publishing the proposals, the GB must send copies of the proposals to the LA, trustees, and the Secretary of State via schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk.

Representation

The representation period starts on the date of the publication of the proposal and must last six weeks. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the GB to be taken into account when the decision is made.

Unlike the foundation trust acquisition process, there is no power for the LA to refer a proposal to the Schools Adjudicator to remove a school's foundation trust or to reduce the number of governors appointed by the foundation trust. However, GBs

must bear in mind that failure to follow the requirements of the statutory process could lead to a complaint to the Secretary of State under Section 496/497 of the Education Act 1996, and/or ultimately be challenged through judicial review.

Decision

The GB is the decision-maker for a removal proposal and must determine the proposal within 3 months of the date of its publication.

If a proposal was brought forward by a majority of governors, then it may be determined by a majority vote of those governors present²⁷.

If a proposal was brought forward by a minority of governors, then the GB may not reject the proposal unless two thirds or more of the governors indicate that they are in favour of its rejection²⁸.

When deciding a proposal for the removal of a foundation trust, the GB should consider the proposal in the context of the original proposal to acquire the foundation trust, and consider whether the foundation trust has fulfilled its expectations. Where new information has come to light regarding the suitability of foundation trust partners, this should be considered.

All decisions must be taken in accordance with the processes prescribed in [The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#)²⁹.

The GB must notify the relevant LA, trustees and the Secretary of State via schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk of their decision.

Implementation

The GB is under a statutory duty to implement any approved proposal, as published, by the approved implementation date, taking into account any modifications made. In changing category, an implementation period begins when the proposal is decided and ends on the date the proposal is implemented. During this period the LA and GB are required to make a new instrument of government for the school, so enough time must be built into the timeframe for this to happen. The GB must then be reconstituted in a form appropriate to the school's new category and also in accordance with the appropriate instrument of government taking into account the [School Governance \(Constitution\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#).

²⁷ As per the School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances) (England) Regulations 2013

²⁸ As per regulation 11(2) of the Removal Regulations

²⁹ Except as otherwise provided by the Removal Regulations.

When removing a foundation trust or a foundation majority, a governor may continue as a governor in the corresponding category (e.g. staff governor, parent governor) if that category remains under the new instrument of government. A member of a current GB who continues as a governor on these grounds holds office for the remainder of the term for which he or she was originally appointed or elected. Where a school with a religious character has no foundation trust, the GB must appoint partnership governors with a view to ensuring that the religious character of the school is preserved and developed in accordance with the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012. There is nothing to prevent the appointment of a former foundation governor being reappointed by the GB as a partnership governor.

The terms of the trust on which land is held for a voluntary or foundation school often include very specific provisions regarding the conduct of the school and the use of any fund held by the foundation trust for the use of the school and premises. When making a proposal to change category, proposers will need to consider whether the current terms on which the school's land is held on trust allows for the change in category proposed. If in doubt, or if a variation in the foundation trust is clearly necessary, promoters and the relevant site trustees are advised to make early contact with the Charity Commission to apply for the terms of the trust to be varied under the relevant trust law.

Modification of proposals

Modifications can only be made to the implementation date and the proposed constitution of the governing body.

Annex A: Information to be included in a prescribed alteration statutory proposal

A statutory proposal for making a prescribed alteration to a school must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support the proposed change. A proposal should be accessible to all interested parties and therefore use 'plain English'.

Proposers will need to be mindful of the factors that will inform the decision-makers assessment when determining the proposal.

As a minimum, the department would expect a proposal to include:

- school and LA details;
- description of alteration and evidence of demand;
- objectives (including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice);
- the effect on other educational institutions within the area;
- project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long-term value for money will be achieved;
- implementation plan; and
- a statement explaining the procedure for responses: support, objections and comments.

Annex B: Further Information

This guidance primarily relates to:

- [The School Organisation \(Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/3110/contents/made)
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/3110/contents/made
- [The School Organisation \(Removal of Foundation, Reduction in Number of Foundation Governors and Ability of Foundation to Pay Debts\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/3475/contents/made) www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/3475/contents/made
- [The School Organisation \(Requirements as to Foundations\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1287/contents/made) www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1287/contents/made
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40)
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40
- [The School Standards and Framework Act 1998](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents)
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents

It also relates to:

- [The School Organisation \(Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools\) Regulations 2013](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/3109/contents/made) www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/3109/contents/made
- [The School Governance \(Constitution\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1034/contents/made)
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1034/contents/made
- [The School Governance \(Constitution and Federations\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2014](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/1257/pdfs/uksi_20141257_en.pdf)
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/1257/pdfs/uksi_20141257_en.pdf
- [The School Governance \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) \(England\) Regulations 2015](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/883/pdfs/uksi_20150883_en.pdf) www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/883/pdfs/uksi_20150883_en.pdf
- [The School Governance \(New Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/958/pdfs/uksi_20070958_en.pdf)
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/958/pdfs/uksi_20070958_en.pdf
- [The School Governance \(Roles, Procedures and Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1624/contents/made) www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1624/contents/made
- [The Childcare Act 2006](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/contents
- [The School Premises \(England\) Regulations 2012](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1943/contents/made)
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1943/contents/made

- [Making Significant Changes to an Existing Academy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-significant-changes-to-an-existing-academy
- [Academy/Free School Presumption – departmental advice](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-a-new-school-free-school-presumption)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-a-new-school-free-school-presumption
- [Establishing New Maintained Schools – departmental advice for local authorities and new school proposers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-new-maintained-schools)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/establishing-new-maintained-schools
- [The School Admissions Code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2) www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2
- [Education Act 1996](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents
- [Equality Act 2010](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
- [Police Act 1997](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/50/contents) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/50/contents
- [Charities Act 2011](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25/contents) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25/contents
- [Public Sector Equality Duty](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty) www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty
- [Home-to-school travel and transport - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance
- [Get information about schools - GOV.UK](http://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/) www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/
- [Consultation principles: guidance - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance
- [School land and property: protection, transfer and disposal - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-land-and-property-protection-transfer-and-disposal)
www.gov.uk/guidance/school-land-and-property-protection-transfer-and-disposal

Annex C: Contact details for RSC offices

- East and North East London - RSC.EASTNELONDON@education.gov.uk
- North - RSC.NORTH@education.gov.uk
- East Midlands and Humber - EMH.RSC@education.gov.uk
- Lancashire and West Yorkshire - LWY.RSC@education.gov.uk
- South Central England and North West London - RSC.SCNWLON@education.gov.uk
- South East and South London - RSC.SESL@education.gov.uk
- South West - RSC.SW@education.gov.uk
- West Midlands - RSC.WM@education.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment

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/default.aspx?page=3281>

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:

Statutory proposals to relocate Atkinson House Special School to the former Richard Coates building in Ponteland, increase the planned pupil numbers from 80 to 100 and change the designation of the school to become co-educational. The former Richard Coates building is adjacent to Richard Coates CE Primary School and to Little Tinklers Nursery.

2) Brief description of the change, decision or proposal:

The Council carried out informal consultation on a proposal to relocate Atkinson House Special School from its current location in Seghill to a former school building in Ponteland with effect from September 2022 from 13 October to 1 December 2021. Following approval by the Council's Cabinet on 11 January 2022, a statutory proposal to relocated Atkinson House Special School to the former site of Richard Coates, increase its planned pupil numbers from 80 to 100 and to change the designation of the school from single sex for boys to co-educational and thereby include specific provision for girls with SEMH. The rationale for this proposal is generally to be able to accommodate the growing numbers of young people in the county being identified with SEMH needs including girls, and in particular to accommodate the students who would have been offered places at the new Gilbert Ward Academy free school had it's opening not been delayed until September 2023.

This EIA has been updated in light of the statutory consultation undertaken in line with DfE guidance.

3) 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

4) The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

In the medium to long-term, there is no reason to believe that the proposed statutory proposal would affect more positively or negatively than their peers any group of children, parents or staff defined by their religion, race or gender-reassignment status. Should the Council decide to implement the proposed statutory proposal at a future date, during the immediate process of transition, families would be invited to inform the Council that they are concerned about the impact that the change may have on the support networks for any individual children who may be at particular risk of harassment or discrimination. Reasonable adjustments would be made to support individual students where appropriate.

It is not envisaged that this proposal would result in the need for staff redundancies at Atkinson House Special School and indeed there are likely to be additional opportunities for employment. In the event, existing HR policies covering relocation of a place of work would apply to staff employed at any of the school where appropriate. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met. Reasonable adjustments would be made for disabled members of staff. The Council operates a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled members of staff.

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.*

5) 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?

All students on roll at Atkinson House Special School have an EHCP for SEMH special educational needs and therefore would be disproportionately impacted should the approval be given to implement the proposal at a future date. The intention of the proposal is that it would have a positive impact on Atkinson House students and future students. Students views on the proposal have been gained as part of the informal consultation process and the majority are in favour of the

proposal. However, a number of students did have some concerns around the move to the alternative site in Ponteland.

The staff of Atkinson House Special school are trained to manage the anxieties that could arise with this group of students as result of this proposal it was approved for implementation. Staff would plan to have a phased approach to the transition with students if the relocation goes ahead, including individual transition plans according to need, to ensure that the impact of the transition is minimal and managed effectively.

Any parent or a carer of a student at Atkinson House Special School or member of staff at the school who has a disability would not be affected disproportionately by the proposal as any reasonable adjustments or arrangements already in place to support a parent, pupil or staff member would be re-provided at the new location and appropriate reasonable adjustments would be made.

It is not expected that any member of staff at one of the adjacent educational settings, parents of pupils at these settings or members of the public would have need of regular access to the grounds or building of Atkinson House Special School should it relocate to the former Richard Coates building.

6) Could disabled people be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

Refer to para. 5

7) 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.)

It is not envisaged that the implementation of the proposed statutory proposal would affect any current arrangements for disabled people to participate in public life as the former Richard Coates building is currently empty and not used by any other Council service or by members of the community.

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

There is a possibility that public attitudes towards young people with SEMH could be impacted by the relocation of Atkinson House Special School to Ponteland. There is no specialist SEND provision within the Ponteland Partnership of schools, either as stand-alone provision or within any of the schools in the partnership.

Feedback received from those consultees who responded during the informal consultation indicates that there is some anxiety among staff at the adjacent educational settings, parents of pupils at these settings and members of the public about the possible behaviour of students at Atkinson House Special School as a result of their SEMH needs.

Should the proposal be approved, appropriate safeguarding measures would be put in place to ensure that all students (including those on roll at Atkinson House) are safe and that all 3 educational provisions and the wider public feel safe.

While there has been some positive feedback from the public about the proposal, there has been a minor element of public feedback that has demonstrated a lack of understanding of the condition of SEMH and use of offensive statements towards this group of vulnerable young people.

Assimilation of the school into the Ponteland community would need to be very carefully managed to engender good and collaborative relationships, and the Governing Body and Leadership Team of the school are fully cognisant of this need.

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

Further to para. 8, there could be a risk of harassment or victimisation of young people attending Atkinson House Special school if the transition is not managed effectively and the school is not able to assimilate within the community.

The measures set out in para. 8 regarding relationships with adjacent settings and the wider community would need to be put in place.

10) 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 premise of the proposal is that the educational experience of young people attending Atkinson House would be enhanced by the relocation to the former Richard Coates building and therefore there is a disproportionate advantage of the proposal to them.

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

Refer to para. 10.

Sex (Gender)

12) What do you know about usage of the services affected by this change, decision or proposal in relation to people of a certain gender, about their experiences of it, and about any current barriers to access?

Currently Atkinson House Special School is designated as a single sex provision for boys diagnosed with SEMH special educational needs aged 11 to 16. Under the proposal, the school would not only relocate, but would extend its provision to secondary aged girls diagnosed with SEMH as there is no dedicated provision currently for them in Northumberland.

13) Could people of a certain gender be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal?

While the proposal to relocate the school would advantage the current and future cohort of boys attending Atkinson House Special School, it would disproportionately advantage girls as provision for them would start to be offered at the school.

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

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that the ability of people of a certain gender to participate in public life would be affected by the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 5 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

15) Could the change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards people of a certain gender (e.g., by increasing or reducing their presence in the community)

To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that public attitudes to people with people of a certain gender. However, ameliorating actions such as those stated in para. 5 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

16) Could the change, decision or proposal make it more or less likely that people of a certain gender will be at risk of harassment or victimisation?

Should the statutory proposal be implemented, the risk of harassment of victimisation of people of a certain gender would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, the relevant actions such as those stated in paragraph 5 would be implemented.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the public, pupil in one of the adjacent education settings, parent of a pupil in one of the adjacent education settings or member of staff at one of the adjacent education settings of certain genders would be more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation should approval be given to implement the proposal. However, should any of member of this protected group of people be identified as at risk as a result of the implementation of this proposal, the authority would encourage staff of Atkinson House Special School to put in place amelioration actions and suitable education programmes to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying.

17) If there are risks that people of a certain gender could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the change, decision or proposal, are there reasonable steps or adjustments that could be taken to reduce these risks?

No evidence has so far been identified to suggest that people of a certain gender could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of the

proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 2 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

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

While none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different genders would be implemented.

Age

19) 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?

Atkinson House Special School provides specialist education to pupils with SEMH needs between 11 and 16 and it is this group of young people who would be most affected by the proposal.

Staff at the school are employed equitably in accordance with the relevant school and council's employment policies. No staff at the school would be at risk of redundancy should the proposal be approved for implementation and indeed there may be additional staff required as a result of the proposed increase in student numbers and redesignation to become co-educational.

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

All students on roll at Atkinson House Special School have an EHCP for SEMH special educational needs and therefore would be disproportionately impacted should the approval be given to implement the proposal at a future date. The intention of the proposal is that it would have a positive impact on Atkinson House students and future students.

21) 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.)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposed statutory proposal would have any effect on the ability of different age groups to participate in public life.

22) 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)

There is a possibility that public attitudes towards young people with SEMH could be impacted by the relocation of Atkinson House Special School to Ponteland, but more as a result of the SEMH needs rather than their age.

Refer to para. 8 for further information.

23) 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?

There could be a risk of harassment or victimisation of the young people attending Atkinson House Special school if the transition is not managed effectively and the school is not able to assimilate within the community.

From consultation feedback, there is a level of concern from some consultees who responded regarding the potential behaviour of Atkinson House Special School students in the Ponteland community and therefore there could be a perceived risk of harassment. As stated, the Governing Body and Leadership team of the school would be keen to build relationships with their adjacent educational settings and the wider community to reduce any levels of concern about the presence of students with SEMH and provide a wider understanding of their needs.

24) 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?

Ref. Para. 23.

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

The premise of the proposal is to create a positive impact for this group of young people with SEMH needs.

Through the Governing Body and Leadership team of the school working with their educational neighbours and the wider community there could be opportunities to broaden their understanding of special educational needs and in particular SEMH which could be to their advantage.

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.

26) 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?

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would create any barriers to students of Atkinson House Special School accessing the school should it relocate to Ponteland as all student as they would receive Home to School Transport.

In addition, any parent of a student at Atkinson House who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old would not be disadvantaged due to the eligibility of students for transport.

Any staff of Atkinson House Special School who may be pregnant would have the same rights extended to them at the proposed site as at the current school site.

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

No, for the reasons set out in para.26.

28) 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, for the reasons set out in para.26.

29) 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)

There is no evidence to suggest that the statutory proposal would have any effect on public attitudes to this protected group under the proposals.

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

No evidence has arisen during consultation to suggest that the statutory proposal would make it more or less likely that this protected group would be at risk of harassment or victimisation under the proposals.

31) 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?

No evidence has been identified during the consultation period that would suggest that the protected group could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the implementation of the statutory proposal for the reasons set out above.

However, if a decision is made to take the next steps towards implementation of the statutory proposal, and any disproportionate disadvantages are identified during the subsequent phases of consultation and implementation, these would be reviewed and solutions to remove such disadvantages would be sought.

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

Ref. para. 26.

Sexual Orientation

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

33) 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?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any student on roll at Atkinson House Special School or a member of staff who identifies as LGBT would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should approval be given to implement the proposal.

However, should any pupil or member of staff who identifies with this group be identified as requiring support, the authority would encourage staff of Atkinson House Special School to use the Stonewall Education champion's resources and to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying.

Should a member of staff identifying as LGBT in Atkinson House Special School feel that their support networks have been disrupted, staff would be made aware of the support available through the Council's LGBT staff group and managers will be made aware of the guide to supporting LGBT staff on the Council Equality and Diversity webpage. HR policies aim to promote equality and inclusion.

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

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that different sexual orientations would be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

35) 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.)

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that the ability of people with different sexual orientations to participate in public life would be affected by the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

36) 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)

To date, there has been no evidence to suggest that public attitudes to people with different sexual orientations. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

37) 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?

Should the statutory proposal be implemented, the risk of harassment or victimisation of people with different sexual orientations would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, the relevant actions stated in paragraph 33 would be implemented.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any member of the public, pupil in one of the adjacent education settings, parent of a pupil in one of the adjacent education settings or member of staff at one of the adjacent education settings who identifies as LGBT would be more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation should the approval be given to implement the proposal. However, should any of this group of people who identifies within this protected group be identified as at risk as a result of the implementation of this proposal, the authority would encourage the staff of Atkinson House Special School to use the Stonewall Education champion's resources and to increase awareness of any potential issues such as increased risk of bullying

38) 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?

No evidence has so far been identified to suggest that people with different sexual orientations could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of the statutory proposal. However, ameliorating actions stated in para. 33 would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

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

While none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different sexual orientations would be implemented, possibly through the implementation of the actions set out in para. 33.

Human Rights

40) 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)

While there is no specific evidence to suggest that the implementation of the proposal would impact positively on human rights, the rationale for this proposal is to provide additional and appropriate educational support and facilities for a vulnerable group of young people with SEMH needs and therefore this would improve the life chances of the students.

PART 3 - Course of Action

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

| | |
|----------|--|
| | The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken. |
| X | The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal would be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken should they be required. |
| | 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. |
| | 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. |

41) 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.

From the initial analysis of the possible negative or positive impacts of the proposal on the groups with protected characteristics, there is evidence to suggest that the students of Atkinson House Special School would be disproportionately advantaged simply by virtue of the premise of the proposal and its rationale set out at para. 2. Should a decision be made by the Council's Cabinet to take move to the formal statutory process, any evidence arising from the statutory consultation that suggests that there could be possible negative impacts, identified risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those groups. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring

42) 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 assessed in the light of feedback from the informal consultation period. Should the proposal be approved and the process move to the publication of a statutory proposal, the EIA would be further updated at the end of the statutory period. Appropriate action would be identified in the light of the consultation and where necessary, an action plan with timescales developed.

PART 5 - Authorisation

Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

Once completed, send your full EIA to: Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk. A summary will then be generated corporately and published to the Council's website.

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Northumberland County Council

COMMITTEE: FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

DATE: 3RD MARCH 2022

Annual Report for Education and Skills Service 2020/21

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

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

Purpose of report

The annual report overview for Education and Skills Service is provided to committee members to:

- inform and review the education performance across Northumberland in 2020/21
- present the work of the central Education and Skills team and review the impact of the work to support continued education challenges throughout the ongoing Covid 19 global pandemic
- inform and review the digital annual report attached to this report.

The Education and Skills Service is comprised of a range of specialist areas and supports early years settings, all key phases of education, virtual school, special educational needs and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as supporting the whole education infrastructure.

Recommendations

Committee is recommended to:

- Review the performance in the headline report.
- Receive the digital annual report and recognise the performance given the continued challenges of the global pandemic and the valuable support provided to all learners within:
 - Early Years settings and Schools
 - Special Education Needs support and service
 - Virtual School
 - Learning and Skills Service inc' Careers Guidance Team and Employability and Skills Service
 - School Organisation and Resources
 - Performance monitoring Team

- Public Health, Schools Human Resources (HR) and Health and Safety (H&S) Team contributions
- Review the key areas for improvement in the Education and Skills priorities that inform how we revisit and shape future improvements and work programme.

At the conclusion of the 2019/2020 Annual report key priorities were identified for continuous improvement and accelerated development across Education and Skills. These priorities now inform the work of the established Education Strategy Board and the strategic and operational direction of the directorate. **(identification complete and work approach aligned)**

The development of a Skills Strategy for Northumberland was a key action to support schools, skills development and access to skills and businesses that align with the economic priorities of the County. **(complete)**

The development of a coherent approach to working with businesses and begin the work to support schools, skills and all of our residents. **(baseline established with work underway to accelerate greater engagement)**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to 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’.

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The annual report for Education and Skills is presented to the committee as a written report and is supported by an additional digitally optimised report which provides viewers with a visual overview of the performance in the 2020/21 academic year and considers the impact of the work undertaken for our children and young people.
- 1.2 Performance is not compared against previous years due to teacher assessed grade (TAG) processes, but can be considered in the context of the broader county and national performance (where available).
- 1.3 Partnership working with schools continues to be good and is improving. The support and guidance from the wider Education and Skills team and support partners (Public Health, H&S and HR for Schools) is widely valued.
- 1.4 The digital world has rapidly become the ‘way of working’ for many and indeed the way of learning. An innovative approach connecting industry and education through a digital platform has raised the profile of the work in Northumberland nationally. Further work and development is needed to maintain the pace of change,

development and expectation as the continuously evolving digital world underpins learning for all and remains a high priority.

- 1.5 The approach by the Inclusive Education service continues to be an important priority to be able to work across services supporting some of our children with the greatest needs and to meet the continually emerging needs as a result of the global pandemic changes to lives, learning and futures.
- 1.6 In May 2021 the SEND re inspection was undertaken and the Written Statement of Action removed for Northumberland, having been judged as making sufficient progress in all three areas. The next phase of focus for Northumberland is to improve systems and processes with the lived experience driving the improvements and to invest in Preparation for Adulthood ethos so more of our children and young people are able to meet their ambitions and plan a future pathway from a much earlier age.
- 1.7 The Northumberland Skills portfolio continues to change to meet the priorities for the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the economic priorities and sectors in Northumberland whereby more residents are supported into employment and greater in work progression. Where gaps in provision exist, Northumberland Skills works to develop or partners with specialists to close gaps in provision and is dynamic in meeting emerging needs. Education development works hand in hand to identify the opportunities and partnerships to extend the breadth.
- 1.8 The School Organisation and Resources Team have adapted and are likely to need to respond rapidly to a changing environment. The work in particular with vouchers to support families across school holiday periods has been very successful and has supported thousands of families to access funds. The innovative thinking, design and modelling has ensured that uniform as well as food could be purchased with the available funds.

2. Background

The Academic year 2020/21 was another year of disruption, restrictions and remote learning amid challenging circumstances within which the profession maintained as stable a position for our children as they possibly could. In short, another extraordinary year in which education and skills have been hugely affected by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

This year has been very different to the previous and in many ways tougher for the schools and skills professionals as well as children, young people, residents and their families. However, what remained clear is the importance of our work for children, young people and residents - whatever the circumstances, we continued to respond and support at every opportunity.

The resilient and determined approach demonstrated by early years settings, schools, skills and education support services to support our children and their families and carers was outstanding and commendable. An unwavering and strengthened approach to keep the child or young person safe and at the heart of decisions remained core to dynamic work practices. The development of a health and well being forum for the workforce was identified and well developed ahead of any national announcements.

The second annual report as a digital format for Northumberland contains links to detailed reports for further reading and review. The report highlights key facets to showcase to everyone the work undertaken that was built upon previous learning, and should be acknowledged and celebrated as incisive, purposeful, decisive and resilient.

The sector continues to recover, respond and reflect, particularly where a return to more usual routine education remains challenging ie Adult Community Learning and Apprenticeships. We highlight areas that continue to be a focus for even greater change to improve the life chances for our children and young people and residents in Northumberland.

The extent of the recovery required to identify and close gaps is one of the greatest challenges we face. It is difficult to begin to calculate the precise recovery required in such circumstances. Ofsted continues to inspect but do not examine outcomes and data in the same way and in particular examine the support infrastructures for pupils.

Our work supporting all aspects and phases of education remains a key priority with specific areas of focus to narrow and close gaps in educational attainment, transition, progress and outcomes. All the while being mindful of ensuring our approaches and systems are delivering social mobility and building our approach to inclusive growth to support future life chances for all.

Academic year 2020/21

2.1 Early Years and Key Stages

2.1.1 The quality of early years provision in Northumberland is excellent. 98% of early years providers were rated Good or Outstanding at summer 2021. Thirteen Ofsted inspections of childcare settings in Northumberland were carried out during the Summer term 2021. Of these, seven were inspections of childminding settings, six of

which received a good grading (one moving from a previous judgement of requires improvement) and one was judged as being compliant. Six private, voluntary or independent (PVI) group settings were inspected, with two receiving outstanding judgements and the remaining four receiving good judgements (one moving from a previous judgement of requires improvement).

2.1.2 The take up of 2-year-old provision is outstanding. 87% of all eligible 2 year olds took up their statutory entitlement to early education in the summer term 2021. This was a 9% increase on the spring term 2021, and was better than the national average of 62%, placing Northumberland 9th highest in the country.

2.1.3. In summer term 2021, 98.4% of parents got their first choice of primary school compared with 90.2% nationally. 97.6% of parents got their first choice of secondary school compared with 82.2% nationally.

2.1.4 Primary education in Northumberland is good. 91% of primary schools in Northumberland were judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good in summer 2021. This compares to the national average of 88%.

2.1.5 Inclusion in primary education in Northumberland is good. Encouragingly, there were no children permanently excluded from a Northumberland primary school in the 2020/21 academic year; this compares to 3 in the previous year.

2.1.6 The quality of secondary education in Northumberland is improving. 67% of secondary schools in Northumberland were judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good in summer 2021. This was below the national average of 76% and needs to improve further

2.1.7 Inclusion in secondary education in Northumberland is improving. There were fewer secondary age school children permanently excluded in the 2020/21 school year, reducing to 44 from 47 the previous year.

2.1.8 At Key Stage 4 schools have performed broadly as expected with no outliers in performance. Headline results have been received from all 16 Northumberland secondary/high schools. There were 3058 pupils in the cohort.

2.1.9 The proportion of pupils entering EBacc subjects continues to rise slowly over time ranging between 0% and 65% with an average of 20%. In 2019 the national figure stood at 40%.

2.1.10 The Attainment 8 figure of 49.7 continues the trend of improvement from 2017.

2.1.11 The gap between the proportions of pupils achieving 4+ English & maths and 5+ English & maths remains at about 25%. In 2019 the national figure stood at 22%.

2.1.12 At Key Stage 5 the greater majority of A level pupils in Northumberland have achieved the grades they required to move onto their chosen next step in education, employment or training.

2.1.13 Schools have performed broadly as expected with no outliers in performance. Headline results have been received from all 15 Northumberland secondary/high

schools. (The Blyth Academy is not running a sixth form at present). There were 1164 pupils in the cohort.

2.1.14 The average A level points score of 39 equates to a grade B. The national average in 2019 was 34.

2.1.15 The average Applied General points score of 36 equates to a Distinction. The national average in 2019 was 29.

2.1.16 90% of pupils in Northumberland achieved the grades that met their entry into their first choice university - around 400 of those pupils are attending Russell Group universities.

2.1.17 The local authority commissions places in alternative provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school. Provision at alternative providers or new schools has to be arranged within six days of an exclusion taking place. In the 2020/21 academic year, sixth-day provision was arranged within timescale for 98% of cases, which is a significant improvement on previous years where the figure has been around 75%.

2.1.18 Four hundred School Improvement Partner visits took place across the academic year providing support and challenge to schools including 31 Ofsted inspection and monitoring visits. More than 100 newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were supported in Northumberland, there were more than a 1000 attendees at early years development and training sessions and routine topical remote learning opportunities were provided to support all school staff.

2.2 Virtual School

2.2.1 The education achievement of Northumberland's care-experienced 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. Being in care has a positive impact on education achievement.

2.2.2 The strong track record of successfully raising the aspirations of our care-experienced children continues. For the third consecutive year achievement at GCSE continued to improve and has almost tripled since 2019, meaning that more pupils are following level 3 courses at age 16.

2.2.3 The right support is being provided to develop meaningful pathways for school leavers into education, training and employment. Achievements at all post-16 stages are at record levels in Northumberland, with 80% of school leavers progressing into further education and more care leavers now studying for degrees.

2.2.4. Inclusive partnership working with schools and alternative providers continues to be strong. For the 13th consecutive year there has been no permanent exclusion of a care-experienced child and the PEP completion rate is 98%.

2.2.5 Relationships with families that electively home educate their children are good. An increasing number of annual reviews have been submitted (only one progressing

to a School Attendance Order), providing re-assurance that more children are receiving a suitable education at home.

2.2.6 The multi-agency strategy to safeguard children that are electively home educated is working. The number of children being educated at home has increased steadily to 294 at July 2021. This is in line with regional and national rises in Elective Home Education.

2.2.7 Overall attendance rates have remained steadily above the national average. With absence rates below national averages at 3.3% Primary (3.7% NA); 5.5% at Secondary (5.7% NA) and 10.25% at special schools (10.6% NA). The impact of the pandemic has been mitigated by targeting schools where there are high levels of persistent absence, children returning to school after a period of elective home education, and pupils who have been out of school for long periods of time.

2.2.8 The safeguarding process for preventing and finding children missing education is highly effective. Five children were reported as missing and were found, and over 1000 children were identified as at risk of going missing and tracked throughout the year.

2.2.9 School engagement with the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) is good. The implementation of the Signs of Safety practice model, a role in the safe return of children to school and implementing learning from case reviews has emerged from the Schools Engagement Group. Safeguarding standards in Northumberland schools and education settings meet DfE, NSSP and Ofsted requirements

2.3 Inclusive Education and Special Educational Needs

2.3.1 Northumberland was revisited in the Summer Term by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and was one of the 2 Local Authorities out of 8 that term, who passed all areas for improvement. The SEND Revisit highlighted the 'significant improvement and a seismic change in leadership and culture', reflected the strength of the SEND partnership with the NHS and the demonstrable progress made.

2.3.2 Throughout 2020- 2021, our specialist teaching and educational psychology services have provided support and advice for children and young people with special educational needs in 98% of our schools.

2.3.4 The High Incidence Needs Teams (HINT) have delivered a service which has been free at the point of delivery, and as a result, they have received 36% more referrals than in the previous school year.

2.3.5 The HINT teams worked most extensively in Blyth, then Berwick followed by Alnwick, Bedlington and Ashington, though Northumberland Inclusive Education Services work has increased in all partnerships. Through 2020/21, the highest

referrals came into Speech, Language & Communication Needs, Autism Support and Emotional Wellbeing & Behaviour.

2.3.6 Low Incidence Needs Teams (LINT) received referrals for 229 children and young people (Sensory Support and Portage) with new referrals into both teams coming from every partnership.

2.3.7 Throughout 2020/21 the Educational Psychology service continued to provide ongoing support and advice to many of the educational settings in Northumberland and children and families, along with specialist advice for all pupils undergoing Education, Health and Care needs assessments. The Service also continued to provide support into our Children's Homes, and the Mental Health Support Teams in Hexham, Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington. They provided over 100 hours of support to children, young people, families and schools/settings related to a small number of critical incidents that took place across the year

2.3.8 The return to school following the pandemic brought challenges across the system, and although exclusions for young people with SEN had fallen significantly over the preceding three years, 202/21 saw a slight rise. Work is ongoing to ensure that support is provided by the local authority to continue the downward trend. For the second year running, however, there were no permanent exclusions for students with EHCPs

2.3.9 NIES delivered training designed by the DfE to support the return to school, 'Wellbeing for Education Return' and this was well attended by schools and settings. This has helped to equip schools with the knowledge and understanding they required to support the additional wellbeing needs of pupils and staff. As a result there has been good use of Kooth and Qwell, online platforms available to the children and young people of Northumberland and staff based in schools. Referrals to the Autism Support and Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Teams rose sharply in the Summer term and we have expanded the teams in order to meet demand. Children and young people referred to the time limited pop up hub in Autumn 2020 continued to be followed up in the Spring term to ensure that appropriate support was provided to maintain their attendance at school.

2.4 Learning and Skills Service (including Careers Guidance and Employability Skill and Services)

2.4.1 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.

2.4.2 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).

2.4.3 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's performance.

2.4.4 Apprenticeship recruitment in line with classroom-based learning also decreased significantly. Apprenticeship performance rates overall have reduced with some 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. Positive learner feedback about blended delivery was received along with the appropriate level of challenge and support which has resulted in minimal delays with end point assessment (EPA). There was a good higher-level achievement at EPA for apprentices, for example, of the Apprentices working towards IC Qualifications EPA, their results for 2020/21 were more than good with 84% who completed their EPA achieving a higher-level result.

2.4.5 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.

2.4.6 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.

2.4.7 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.

2.4.8 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.

2.4.9 At July 2021 NEET (including unknown) was 4.7% in Northumberland compared to the all-England figure of 5.3%.

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

2.4.11 The Employability and Skills Service has continued to work throughout the pandemic restrictions and challenges 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 in October 2021.

2.4.12 The DWP Jets (Job entry targeted support) 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.

2.4.13 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. 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.

2.5 School Organisation and Resources

2.5.1 The £48m Ponteland joint schools and leisure centre were completed this year. They are now home to a 420-place primary school, 1,600-place high school, library and leisure centre with 25m pool, learner pool, aqua play, gym, café, clip 'n' climb, soft play, spa, bar and 3G and grass sports pitches. The development offers all that was asked of it by its users, whilst also providing a lifelong legacy for the community, allowing residents of all ages and abilities to use the facilities.

2.5.2 Despite COVID-19 restrictions for leisure services, Active Northumberland has seen a 45% increase in membership, with exercise and swimming classes fully

booked each week upon opening. The scheme has also generated over £40.6m worth of social value in the local area and has had an enormous economic effect for the county of Northumberland.

2.5.3 The £37m Hexham Middle and Queen Elizabeth High schools also welcomed their students, opening the doors to their newly co-located buildings in September 2021. The 18-month construction programme saw the completion of brand-new modern teaching blocks, specialised spaces, contemporary sporting facilities as well the refurbishment of a Grade II listed building for use predominantly by the students but also the local community of Hexham to great acclaim and universally positive feedback. In total the council has invested circa £40m during the 2020/21 academic year in improving the school estate.

2.5.4 Permanent Exclusions are down by 12% and this is the third year we have seen a decline. 98% of permanently excluded learners accessed provision within 6 days; a further 69 exclusions have been prevented by offering schools support, advice and guidance re: inclusion including the brokering of managed moves and alternative provision placements.

2.5.5 Over 98% of first preferences were allocated in the primary and secondary admission rounds with Northumberland being the top-ranked authority in the Country for offering parents of children entering reception in September 2021 their first choice of primary/first school.

2.5.6 Since December 2020 over 47,000 free school meal vouchers have been issued at a value of over £2.1m to support children and young people entitled to free school meals to fund food and uniform costs over each school holiday period. Northumberland has had one of the highest take up rates for the scheme in the country with 95% of parents redeeming the vouchers provided for them.

2.5.7 A total of £860,236 exceptional payments were made to 81 Schools to support those who had additional exceptional costs arising due to the coronavirus. This was over and above the provisions set up by the Department for Education via their covid workforce fund.

2.5.8 The second iteration of the School Organisation Plan for Northumberland has now been published and covers the period 2021-2024, it sets out how the council will fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all children and young people resident within the county.

2.6 Education Development

2.6.1 NCC has made significant progress towards opening the first of its technical training facilities. Over £1m funding is ringfenced in the medium-term financial plan to implement the Welding & Fabrication training centre at Port of Blyth, and as of October 2021 works tendering and work to agree lease on the nominated building are in progress.

2.6.2 Colleagues have worked together to deliver maximum value for Northumberland from the inward investment of the battery manufacturing Gigaplant located in Cambois. A three-part strategy to deliver maximum impact in the

following areas has been agreed between NCC and BritishVolt as part of the terms of the Section 106 agreement:

- Construction training, employment and procurement strategy, applicable during the seven year construction phase.
- Manufacturing employment plan, applicable for first 15 years of operation.
- Manufacturing education & training plan, applicable for first 15 years of operation

2.6.3 NCC education directorate has worked very closely with Regeneration colleagues to set out a number of aspirational education and skills-related projects to support a wide range of aspirational projects across the county. These include the Ashington Investment Plan, Blyth Energy Central Learning Hub, Kielder radion telescope development and the development of a county wide Skills Strategy underpinning the economic priorities for Northumberland.

2.6.4 NCC has supported Health Education England in the launch of work-based supported internships for young people with Educational Health Care Plans, these programmes being delivered within Northumbria Health Care Trust settings. Support to grow the provision continues, enhancing the impacts for young people with talent but facing challenges in accessing opportunity to enter valuable and sustainable career paths.

2.6.5 Global Bridge digital platform has been connected with 12 of the 16 secondary schools in Northumberland in 2020/21 and supported for a two year period. The direct linking of industry working with education on a global digital platform supports access to apprenticeships, work experience and in the world in which we now live and work, a digital profile for our young people to be able to showcase their achievements to potential employers. Northumberland is the leading Local Authority across England spearheading this work.

2.7 Supporting infrastructure teams for Education and Skills

2.7.1 the Data and performance team routinely configures available data to track and review performance without the comparability of national data. The collection and support for schools particularly when supporting children and families open to social care was valued by schools and most importantly supported some of the most vulnerable pupils.

2.7.2 The Data Unit gave schools early estimates of the amount of pupil premium they would receive, beneficial given that there was no May 2021 census so schools would have had to wait until July. The provision of weekly reports on which learners have an allocated social worker continued during the periods of lockdown and when restrictions lifted so that schools knew their vulnerable learners.

2.7.3 Public Health have become an extension of the Education and Skills team throughout the global pandemic. One of their strands of work 'Education Outbreak Control' is chaired by one of the education senior staff and has been available almost 7 days per week since March 2020 supporting early years settings, schools, and skills providers. The work, research, focus and attention to narrow down root causes and provide solutions has been relentless and valued by everyone involved.

2.7.4 Relationships with trade unions throughout a very challenging period have been supported by Schools HR very well. Dedicated support for schools, workshops for staff, briefing and routine updates as well as supporting a peer head teacher well being group has contributed well to the workforce relationships amid the challenging and rapidly changing guidance and expectations received under which the schools system has worked.

2.7.5 Health and Safety support and guidance for schools has continued to be of a very high standard with schools recognising the standard of advice and documentation provided as exceptionally high. Briefings, workshops, partnership and individual school guidance has been provided routinely to support the eco system and ensure Covid safe environments. Whilst recognising the responsibility and decision making is devolved to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors the working relationships are valued and welcomed by Headteachers, Skills and Early Years providers.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Academic Year 2020/21 has been a year of so many changes and challenges to navigate for children, young people, schools and skills providers. The system has not yet begun to quantify the 'levelling up' to return the sector to a stable baseline in 2019. There is much happening and to do to agree the baseline for future planning. The position for terminal examinations in 2021 is not yet agreed and with two years of disrupted education routine, there will be continuous challenges for a while to come. The role of the Local Authority team is to support and underpin the route to a steady baseline and support ambition, education and success for every child, young person and resident in Northumberland. The identified focus for priorities underpins this approach.

3.2 The outcomes for our children and young people cannot be measured against performance in previous years due to the nature of the assessed process in 2021 (different to 2020). We are able to review collectively the performance across the county and provide assurance that there are no performances that are significantly differing to regional or national performance figures available.

3.3 The most important element is that our young people were prepared and supported with the grades they needed to be able to progress to their destination of choice whether that is sixth form, post 16 study, University or into employment. The average grade performances continued to rise at A level and Attainment 8 figures continue to improve. A focus for improvement at Progress 8 is required.

3.4 For Adult Learners, the return to a classroom has been much more challenging. As parents or grandparents caring for children to support family incomes, their engagement in learning has reduced. Enrolments have reduced this year. The investment in digital equipment to support this has helped but the residents do not have the time to spend long periods on line learning and value much more face to

face classroom engagement. Continued engagement has been good but a confident return to learning in the classroom will be a focus.

3.5 The extent of the recovery required to identify and close gaps is one of the greatest challenges we face. It is difficult to begin to calculate the precise recovery required in such circumstances. The work of School Improvement with schools across Northumberland will continue to target areas specific in each school and will work with Headteachers, all staff in school and governors to achieve this and raise the levels of attainment and progress at each key stage even further.

3.6 The work to promote and engage with stakeholders so they are informed and own the identified priorities forms a key cornerstone of the work of the Local Authority team. Everyone talks about the impact of the global pandemic as unprecedented. In Northumberland that recognition was revised a year ago with clearly focused priorities shaping the work undertaken and we are now beginning to see some of the focused work beginning to make a difference and will continue to be dynamic and evolve to meet changing needs of our education eco system. Our recovery and steadfast approach is non-negotiable and has every child, family and resident at the heart of the approach.

3.7 The impact of the work undertaken by the whole education system across Northumberland is documented in this report. At a headline level performance in 2020/21 continues to improve for our children, attendance is improving and exclusions are reducing. Our performance against peer authorities in aspects such as admissions and first choice school places remains in the upper decile nationally.

3.8 Our approach to meet more children's needs much closer to home is, as we see the rising demand for our Inclusive Education Services, an accelerant for our immediate actions and work. Improving outcomes for some of our most disadvantaged residents and ensuring our work at every level is joined with relevant services and partners to ensure we are targeting the right and best outcomes is the core of our strategy to achieve best value at pace.

3.9 There is much for the sector to celebrate across Northumberland, the sterling work and professional standards demonstrated in challenging environments showcases the resilience and hard work and commitment for our children, young people and residents' futures.

Implications

| | |
|--|---|
| Policy | The actions set out in this report support the vision and values of the Council's Corporate Plan. All DFE / ESFA policies and guidance are reviewed, interpreted and shared. |
| Finance and value for money | All budgets and decisions conform to expected DFE /ESFA funding requirements. |
| Legal | Northumberland County Council has statutory responsibilities with schools and academies as well as colleges and post 16 providers. The statutory responsibilities are clearly defined within policy and priorities for Education and Skills; within specific officer roles and also within the Board structures that engage with schools and academies and wider stakeholders to engage and to assure all that statutory duties are met. Formal reporting routines are embedded across the corporate calendar to ensure oversight and decision making is clear. |
| Procurement | None |
| Human Resources | None |
| Property | Eight delivery sites around the county – 7 are shared sites, one is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Service. Schools have delegated responsibility for buildings. |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) N/A X | |
| Risk Assessment | All schools and staff have individual risk assessments. All sites are risk assessed. All Schools and Skills sites are covid risk assessed. Skills sites undertake reviews every week as well as spot checks on premises to ensure routines and expectations are being followed |
| Crime & Disorder | The report has considered Section 1 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it. |
| Customer Consideration | Service plans and systems are approached from the pupil/family/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 has significantly reduced the travel and carbon footprint in 2020/21. |
| Health and Wellbeing | Staff well-being is of high importance. Systems such as Kooth and Qwell are in place to support pupils and staff as well as bespoke arrangements to meet the needs of particular circumstances. |
| Wards | All aspects of the service supports all wards in Northumberland, the digital reach has now expanded this opportunity. |

Report sign off

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| 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

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



Northumberland County Council

Annual Report for Education & Skills Service

2020-21



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The resilient and determined approach demonstrated by early years settings, schools, skills and education support services to recognise the needs of our children and their families and carers was outstanding and commendable.

The annual report for the Education & Skills Service is designed to inform and review education performance across Northumberland. Analysing the impact of work completed across the year underpins the review of key areas for improvement in collective education and skills priorities, informing how we revisit and shape future progression.

The Academic year 2020-21 was another year of disruption, restrictions and remote learning amid challenging circumstances within which the profession maintained as stable a position for our children as they possibly could. In short, another extraordinary year in which education and skills have been hugely affected by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

This year has been very different to the previous, and in many ways tougher for the schools and skills professionals as well as children, young people, residents and their families. However, what remained clear is the importance of our work for children, young people and residents - whatever the circumstances, we continued to respond and support at every opportunity.

An unwavering and strengthened approach to keep the child or young person safe and at the heart of decisions, remained core to dynamic work practices. The development of a health and wellbeing forum for the workforce was identified and well developed ahead of any national announcements.

This is the second annual report for Northumberland which has been produced in a digital format. It contains numerous links to detailed reports for further reading and review. This report highlights key facets to showcase to everyone the work undertaken that was built upon previous learning, and should be acknowledged and celebrated as incisive, purposeful, decisive and resilient.

The sector continues to recover, respond and reflect, particularly where a return to more usual routine education remains challenging i.e. Adult Community Learning and Apprenticeships. We highlight areas that continue to be a focus for even greater change to improve the life chances for our children and young people as well as residents in Northumberland.

The extent of the recovery required to identify and close gaps is one of the greatest challenges we face. It is difficult to begin to calculate the precise recovery required in such circumstances. Ofsted continues to inspect but do not examine outcomes and data in the same way and in particular examine the support infrastructures for pupils.

Our work supporting all aspects and phases of education remains a key priority with specific areas of focus to narrow and close gaps in educational attainment, transition, progress and outcomes. All the while being mindful of ensuring our approaches and systems are delivering social mobility and building our approach to inclusive growth, supporting future life chances for all.

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

Audrey Kingham
Director of
Education and Skills

Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson
Lead Member
Children's Services



Foundation Stage and Primary

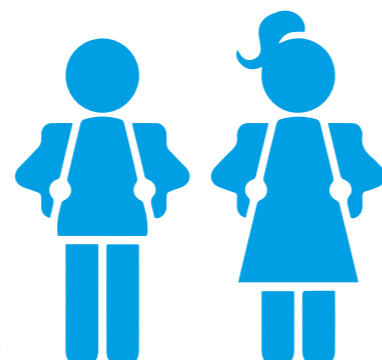

Secondary

Impact across 2020-21
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The quality of early years provision in Northumberland is excellent.


98% of early years providers were rated Good or Outstanding at Summer 2021.

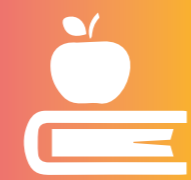
The take up of 2-year-old provision is outstanding

87% of all eligible 2 year olds took up their statutory entitlement to early education in the summer term 2021.

This was a **9% increase** on the spring term 2021, and was better than the **National Average of 62%**, placing Northumberland **9th highest in the country**




In the Summer term 2021, **98.4%** of parents got their first choice of primary school compared with **90.2%** nationally.



Primary education in Northumberland is good

91% of primary schools in Northumberland were **judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good in Summer 2021**. This compares to the National Average of **88%**



Inclusion in primary education in Northumberland

Encouragingly, there were **no children permanently excluded** from a Northumberland primary school in the **2020-21 academic year**; this compares to 3 in the previous year



The quality of secondary education in Northumberland is improving

67% of secondary schools in Northumberland were judged by Ofsted to be Outstanding or Good in Summer 2021. This was below the National Average of 76% and needs to improve further

Inclusion in secondary education in Northumberland is improving

There were fewer secondary age school children permanently excluded in the 2020-21 school year, reducing to **44** from **47** the previous year

At Key Stage 4 schools have performed broadly as expected with no outliers in performance


97.6% of parents got their first choice of secondary school compared with 82.2% nationally




Headline results have been received from all 16 Northumberland secondary/high schools. **There were 3058 pupils in the cohort**



The proportion of pupils entering EBacc subjects continues to rise slowly over time ranging between **0% and 65%** with an **average of 20%**. In 2019 the national figure stood at 40%



The **Attainment 8 figure of 49.7** continues the trend of **improvement from 2017**



The gap between the proportions of pupils achieving **4+ English & maths and 5+ English & maths remains at about 25%**. In 2019 the national figure stood at 22%

At Key Stage 5 the greater majority of A level pupils in Northumberland have achieved the grades they required to move onto their chosen next step in education, employment or training

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Schools have performed broadly as expected with no outliers in performance</p> | <p>Headline results have been received from all 15 Northumberland secondary/high schools. (The Blyth Academy is not running a sixth form at present). There were 1164 pupils in the cohort</p> | <p>The average A level points score of 39 equates to a grade B.</p> <p>The National Average in 2019 was 34</p> | <p>The average Applied General points score of 36 equates to a Distinction.</p> <p>The National Average in 2019 was 29</p> | <p>90% of pupils in Northumberland achieved the grades that met their entry into their first choice university - around 400 of those pupils are attending Russell Group universities</p> |
|---|---|--|--|---|

School improvement

More than
100

newly qualified teachers
(NQTs) were supported in Northumberland

400

School Improvement Partner visits took place across the academic year providing support and challenge to schools including **31 Ofsted inspection and monitoring visits**

More than
1000

attendees at early years development and training sessions

and routine topical remote learning opportunities were provided to support all school staff.

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Alternative provision

The local authority commissions places in alternative provision for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school. Provision at alternative providers or new schools has to be arranged within six days of an exclusion taking place.

Details on alternative provision in Northumberland are available in the alternative provider catalogue here.

In the 2020-21 academic year, sixth-day provision was arranged within timescale for **98% of cases, which is a significant improvement on previous years where the figure has been around 75%**

The education achievement of Northumberland's care-experienced children improves when they enter care, and the highest achievers are those who have been in care the longest.

The strong track record of successfully raising the aspirations of our care-experienced children continues. For the third consecutive year achievement at GCSE continued to improve and has almost tripled since 2019, meaning that more pupils are following level 3 courses at age 16.

The right support is being provided to develop meaningful pathways for school leavers into education, training and employment.

Inclusive partnership working with schools and alternative providers continues to be strong.

Relationships with families that electively home educate their children are good. An increasing number of annual reviews have been submitted (only one progressing to a School Attendance Order), providing re-assurance that more children are receiving a suitable education at home.

The multi-agency strategy to safeguard children that are electively home educated is working. The number of children being educated at home has increased steadily to 294 at July 2021. This is in line with regional and national rises in Elective Home Education.

80% of our looked after pupils who achieved 5+ GCSEs with grades 9 – 5 had been in care for at least 3 years.

Being in care has a **positive impact on education achievement.**

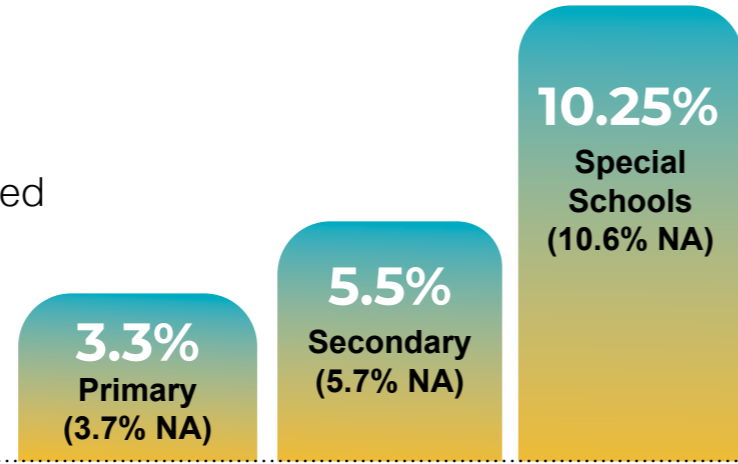
Achievements at all post-16 stages are at record levels in Northumberland, with **80% of school leavers progressing into further education and more care leavers now studying for degrees.**

For the **13th consecutive year** there has been no permanent exclusion of a care-experienced child and **the PEP completion rate is 98%.**



Overall attendance rates have remained steadily above the National Average.

Absence rates are below National Averages at:



The impact of the pandemic has been mitigated by targeting schools where there are high levels of persistent absence, children returning to school after a period of elective home education, and pupils who have been out of school for long periods of time.

The safeguarding process for preventing and finding children missing education is highly effective



Five children were reported as missing and were found, and over **1000 children were identified as at risk of going missing and tracked throughout the year.**

School engagement with the Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) is good.

The implementation of the Signs of Safety practice model, a role in the safe return of children to school and implementing learning from case reviews has emerged from the Schools Engagement Group.



Northumberland was revisited in the Summer Term by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and was **one of the 2 Local Authorities out of 8 that term, who passed all areas for improvement.**

Throughout 2020- 2021, our specialist teaching and educational psychology services have provided support and advice for children and young people with special educational needs in **98%** of our schools.

- The SEND Revisit highlighted the 'significant improvement and a seismic change in leadership and culture'**, and reflected the strength of the SEND partnership with the NHS and the demonstrable progress made.
- The High Incidence Needs Teams (HINT) have delivered a service which has been free at the point of delivery, and as a result, they have received **36% more referrals than in the previous school year.**
- Low Incidence Needs Teams (LINT) received **referrals for 229 children and young people (Sensory Support and Portage)** with new referrals into both teams coming from every partnership.

The HINT teams worked most extensively in Blyth, then Berwick followed by Alnwick, Bedlington and Ashington, though Northumberland Inclusive Education Services work has increased in all partnerships. **Through 2020/21, the highest referrals came into Speech, Language & Communication Needs, Autism Support and Emotional Wellbeing & Behaviour.**

Throughout 2020-21 the Educational Psychology service continued to provide ongoing support and advice to many of the educational settings in Northumberland and children and families, along with specialist advice for all pupils undergoing Education, Health and Care needs assessments. The Service also continued to provide support into our Children’s Homes, and the Mental Health Support Teams in Hexham, Blyth, Ashington and Bedlington. **They provided over 100 hours of support to children, young people, families and schools/ settings related to a small number of critical incidents that took place across the year.**



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.

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’s performance.

Apprenticeship recruitment in line with classroom-based learning also decreased significantly. Apprenticeship performance rates overall have reduced with some 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. Positive learner feedback about blended delivery was received along with the appropriate level of challenge and support which has resulted in minimal delays with end point assessment (EPA).

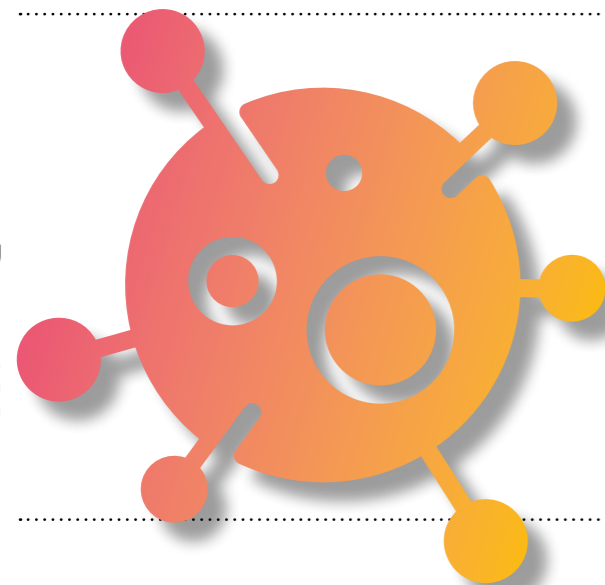
2020-21 was another year of disruption and change and a very untypical academic year for education, skills and training. **The Learning and Skills service self-assessment grades the service as GOOD, in terms of Ofsted gradings for 2020-21.**

The achievement rate excluding English and mathematics is **93%**. **Achievement rates for learners with an EHCP is outstanding at 100%** (learning continued on site throughout lockdown/ restrictions).

Adult Learning for those aged over 19 years forms the largest majority of the service and **remains as a GOOD performance with an achievement rate of 84%, just below the National Average.**

There was a good higher-level achievement at EPA for apprentices, for example, of the Apprentices working towards IC Qualifications EPA, **their results for 2020-21 were more than good with 84% who completed their EPA achieving a higher-level result.**

The return to school following the pandemic brought challenges across the system, and although exclusions for young people with SEN had fallen significantly over the preceding three years, 2020-21 saw a slight rise. Work is ongoing to ensure that support is provided by the local authority to continue the downward trend. **For the second year running, however, there were no permanent exclusions for students with EHCPs.**



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NIES delivered training designed by the DfE to support the return to school, ‘Wellbeing for Education Return’ and this was well attended by schools and settings.

This has helped to equip schools with the knowledge and understanding they required to support the additional wellbeing needs of pupils and staff. As a result there has been good use of Kooth and Qwell, online platforms available to the children and young people of Northumberland and staff based in schools.

Referrals to the Autism Support and Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Teams rose sharply in the Summer term and we have expanded the teams in order to meet demand. Children and young people referred to the time limited pop up hub in Autumn 2020 continued to be followed up in the Spring term to ensure that appropriate support was provided to maintain their attendance at school.



(including Careers Guidance and Employability Skills & Services)



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.**

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.



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.

Careers 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.



Learners excel in an environment in which they feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination. 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-19 safe learning environments.**

At July 2021 **NEET (including unknown) was 4.9% in Northumberland compared to the all-England figure of 5.3%.**



The Employability and Skills Service has continued to work throughout the pandemic restrictions and challenges 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 in October 2021.



The DWP Jets (Job entry targeted support) 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.



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.

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-19 triage programme and DWP Employment programmes will be supported by the Skills Service.



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They are now home to a 420-place primary school, 1,600-place high school, library and leisure centre with 25m pool, learner pool, aqua play, gym, café, clip 'n' climb, soft play, spa, bar and 3G and grass sports pitches. The development offers all that was asked of it by its users, whilst also providing a lifelong legacy for the community, allowing residents of all ages and abilities to use the facilities.



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Education Development

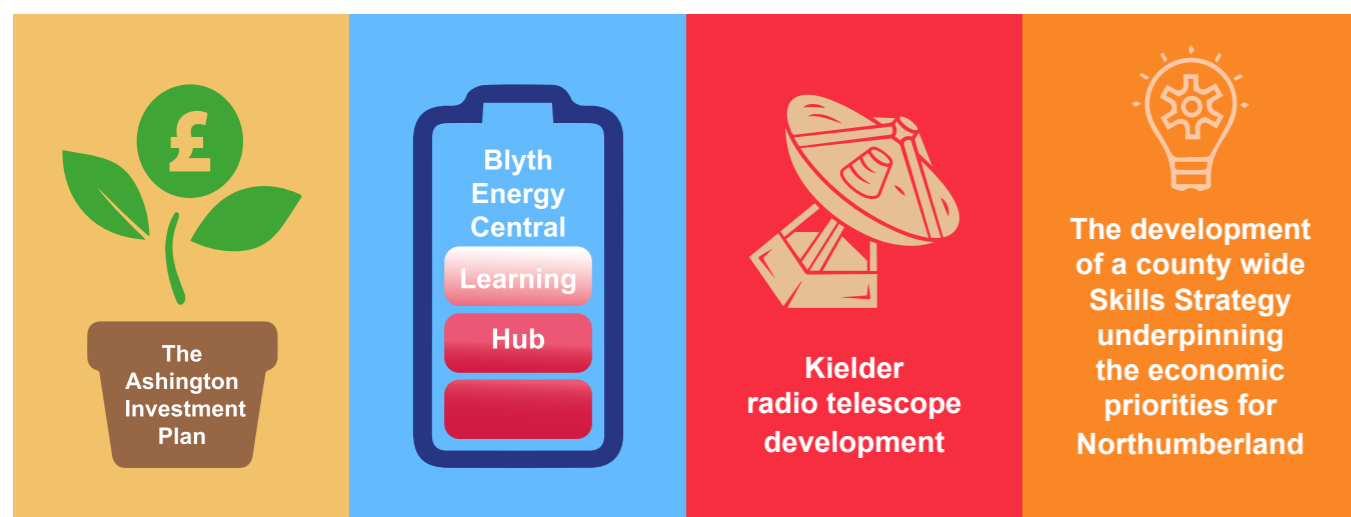
Northumberland County Council has made significant progress towards opening the first of its technical training facilities. Over £1m funding is ringfenced in the medium-term financial plan to implement the Welding & Fabrication Training Centre at Port of Blyth, and as of October 2021 works tendering and work to agree lease on the nominated building are in progress.

Collaborating to deliver maximum value for Northumberland from the inward investment of the battery manufacturing Gigaplant located in Cambois is of paramount importance. A three-part strategy to deliver maximum impact in the following areas has been agreed between Northumberland County Council and BritishVolt as part of the terms of the Section 106 agreement:

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Northumberland County Council's Education and Skills directorate has worked very closely with Regeneration colleagues to set out a number of education and skills-related projects to support a wide range of aspirations across the county. These include:



Northumberland County Council supported Health Education England in the launch of work-based supported internships for young people with Educational Health Care Plans, these programmes being delivered within Northumbria Health Care Trust settings. Support to grow the provision continues, enhancing the impacts for young people with talent but facing challenges in accessing opportunity to enter valuable and sustainable career paths.

Global Bridge digital platform has been connected with 12 of the 16 secondary schools in Northumberland in 2020-21 and supported for a two year period. The direct linking of industry working with education on a global digital platform supports access to apprenticeships, work experience and in the world in which we now live and work, a digital profile for our young people to be able to showcase their achievements to potential employers. Northumberland is the leading Local Authority across England spearheading this work.

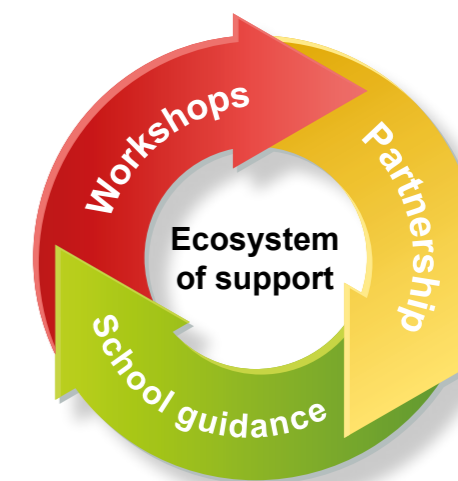
Supporting infrastructure teams for Education & Skills

The Data Unit & Performance team routinely configures available data to track and review performance without the comparability of national data. The provision of weekly reports on which learners have an allocated social worker continued during the periods of lockdown and when restrictions lifted so that schools' knowledge of their vulnerable learners was enhanced.

Public Health has become an extension of the Education and Skills team throughout the global pandemic. One of their strands of work 'Education Outbreak Control' is chaired by one of the education senior staff and has been available almost 7 days per week since March 2020 supporting early years settings, schools, and skills providers. The work, research, focus and attention to narrow down root causes and provide solutions has been relentless and valued by everyone involved.

Relationships with trade unions throughout a very challenging period have been supported by Schools HR very well. Dedicated support for schools, workshops for staff, briefing and routine updates as well as supporting schools via head teacher working groups, has contributed well to the workforce relationships amid the challenging and rapidly changing guidance and expectations received under which the schools system has worked.

Health & Safety support and guidance for schools has continued to be of a very high standard with schools recognising the standard of advice and documentation provided as exceptionally high. Briefings, workshops, partnership and individual school guidance has been provided routinely to support the ecosystem and ensure COVID-19 safe environments.



The Future

Academic Year 2020-21 has been a year of so many changes and challenges to navigate for children, young people, schools and skills providers. The system has not yet begun to quantify the 'levelling up' to return the sector to a stable baseline in 2019. There is much happening and to do to agree the baseline for future planning.

The position for terminal examinations in 2021 is not yet agreed and with two years of disrupted education routine, there will be continuous challenges for a while to come. The role of the Local Authority team is to support and underpin the route to a steady baseline and support ambition, education and success for every child, young person and resident in Northumberland. The identified focus for priorities underpins this approach.

The outcomes for our children and young people cannot be measured against performance in previous years due to the nature of the assessed process in 2021 (different to 2020). We are able to review collectively the performance across the county and provide assurance that there are no performances that are significantly differing to regional or national performance figures available.

The most important element is that our young people were prepared and supported with the grades they needed to be able to progress to their destination of choice whether that is sixth form, post 16 study, University or into employment. The average grade performances continued to rise at A level and Attainment 8 figures continue to improve. A focus for improvement at Progress 8 is required.

For Adult Learners, the return to a classroom has been much more challenging. As parents or grandparents caring for children to support family incomes, their engagement in learning has reduced. Enrolments have reduced this year. The investment in digital equipment to support this has helped but the residents do not have the time to spend long periods on line learning and value much more face to face classroom engagement. Continued engagement has been good but a confident return to learning in the classroom will be a focus.

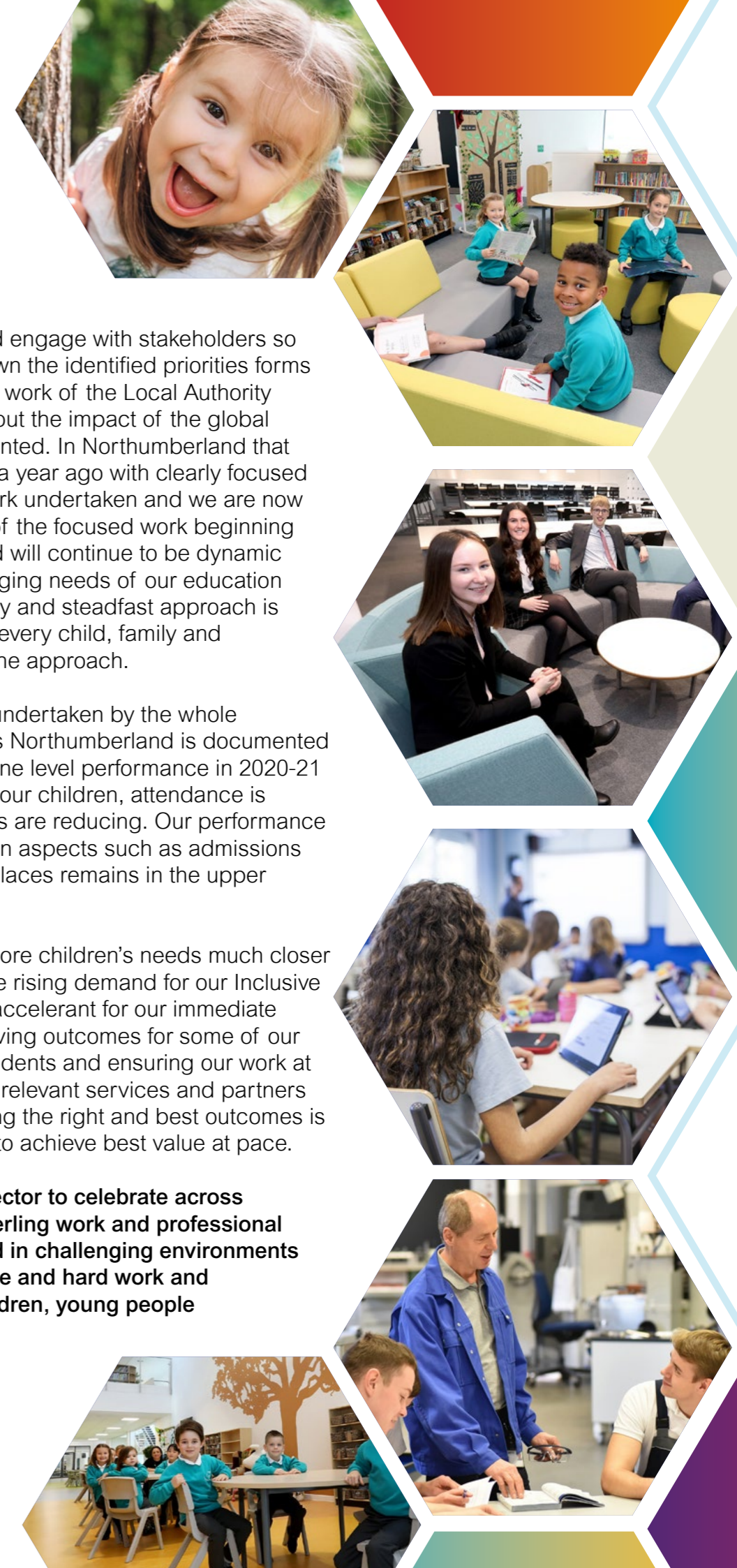
The extent of the recovery required to identify and close gaps is one of the greatest challenges we face. It is difficult to begin to calculate the precise recovery required in such circumstances. The work of School Improvement with schools across Northumberland will continue to target areas specific in each school and will work with Headteachers, all staff in school and governors to achieve this and raise the levels of attainment and progress at each key stage even further.

The work to promote and engage with stakeholders so they are informed and own the identified priorities forms a key cornerstone of the work of the Local Authority team. Everyone talks about the impact of the global pandemic as unprecedented. In Northumberland that recognition was revised a year ago with clearly focused priorities shaping the work undertaken and we are now beginning to see some of the focused work beginning to make a difference and will continue to be dynamic and evolve to meet changing needs of our education eco system. Our recovery and steadfast approach is non-negotiable and has every child, family and resident at the heart of the approach.

The impact of the work undertaken by the whole education system across Northumberland is documented in this report. At a headline level performance in 2020-21 continues to improve for our children, attendance is improving and exclusions are reducing. Our performance against peer authorities in aspects such as admissions and first choice school places remains in the upper decile nationally.

Our approach to meet more children's needs much closer to home is, as we see the rising demand for our Inclusive Education Services, an accelerant for our immediate actions and work. Improving outcomes for some of our most disadvantaged residents and ensuring our work at every level is joined with relevant services and partners to ensure we are targeting the right and best outcomes is the core of our strategy to achieve best value at pace.

There is much for the sector to celebrate across Northumberland, the sterling work and professional standards demonstrated in challenging environments showcases the resilience and hard work and commitment for our children, young people and residents' futures.



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

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USEFUL LINKS

[Children & Young People's Plan](#)

[Northumberland Skills Annual Report](#)

[SEND offer](#)

[School Organisation Report](#)

[Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report 2020](#)

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County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF.
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Version 1: February 2022



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Northumberland County Council

Families and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3RD MARCH 2022

Safeguarding Activity Trends and Benchmarking Report

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

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

Purpose of report

To provide analysis of trends within the social work activity in responding to safeguarding concerns regarding Northumberland's children and young people; highlighting key indicators of performance, with comparisons to national and regional variations.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) Identify any issues for further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'Living' and 'Learning' priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key issues

- Whilst there is variation in the numbers of contacts received, this is mostly due to school closures during the Covid-19 lockdown period.
- There are less children and families being re-referred to children's social work services, indicating the right service at the right time, and that families can sustain the successes that led to case closure.
- Where children are at risk of significant harm, cases are responded to appropriately and in a timely manner. Where children are subject to a child protection plan, these are reviewed regularly, with very small numbers of plans lasting longer than two years.
- Numbers of children in care increased initially at the start of 2020, but have since been reducing. When children leave care in Northumberland, a higher proportion are adopted, made subject to a special guardianship order or return home than nationally.
- With regards to the social work workforce, the staff turnover rate, proportion of agency workers employed, vacancy rate and sickness absence rates all increased

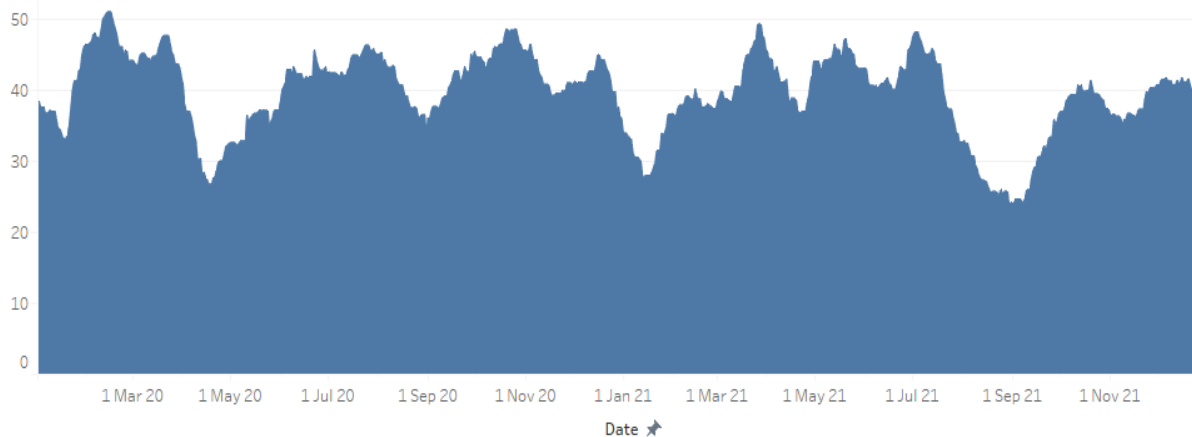
in 2021 (compared to 2020) – reflecting the issues that all authorities are facing with the recruitment and retention of their social work workforce.

Background

TRENDS WITHIN THE SAFEGUARDING PROCESS

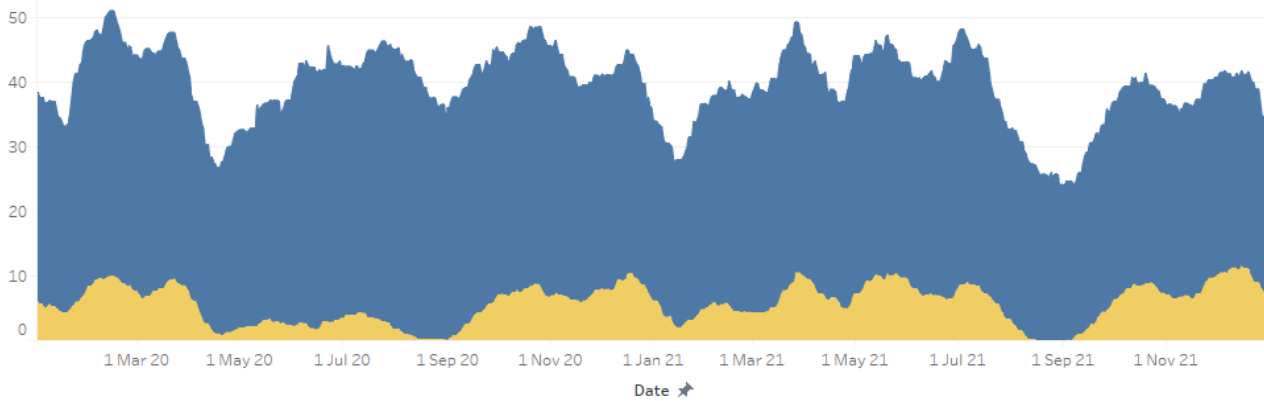
1. Northumberland children’s services established their ‘front door’ in 2017, which in a social care context, is an arrangement where professionals gather information and make decisions about which pathways to follow with regards to the health, well-being, and safety of children.
2. Within the realms of the ‘front door’, an initial ‘contact’ is when an organisation or individual gets in touch with them about a child. This contact can sometimes be a request for general advice, or a request for a service in the form of a ‘referral’. A referral, as defined by Department for Education (DfE) is ‘a request for services to be provided by local authority children’s social care’

Chart 1 – number of contacts received per day (figures are a 4-week average)



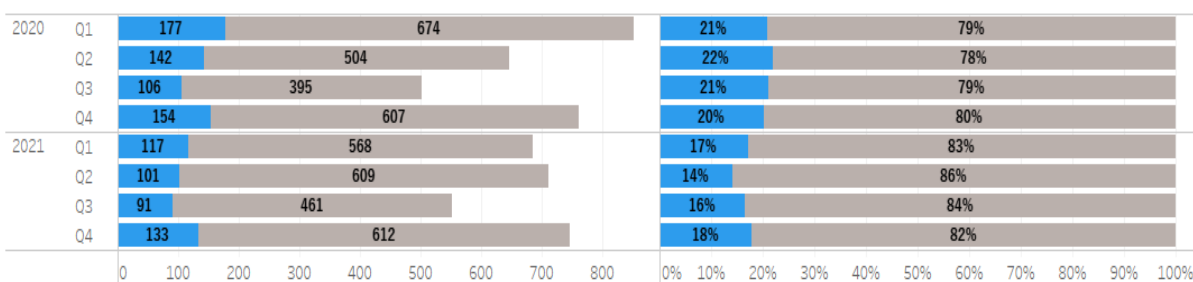
3. Chart 1 shows the number of contacts received per day over a 4-week average between January 2020 and December 2021. The numbers show some periods where there were less contacts per day on average, with these periods being mostly due to schools being closed due to Covid-19 lockdown or during holiday periods – see Chart 2.

Chart 2 – number of contacts (blue) v school contacts (yellow) received per day (figures are a 4-week average)



4. Over the course of 2021, Northumberland’s ‘front door’ received 13,698 contacts in total for 9,185 children living within 8,206 households. Of the total contacts, 9,460 of these (69%) were triaged by social work services, with the remainder being directed towards early help services¹.
5. From the 9,460 contacts triaged by social work services in 2021, 28% of these (2,692) converted to a referral – which is a similar proportion to 2020 (25%) and to the latest national figure of 25%². 2,692 referrals, when equated to the most recent child population figures in Northumberland³, gives a rate of 458 referrals per 10,000 children: above the latest national figure (2020/21) of 438 but below the latest regional figure (2020/21) of 507.
6. One of the national performance indicators that is monitored closely within children’s services is the proportion of repeat referrals (re-referrals) within twelve months of a previous referral. To count as a re-referral, the case must have been open to a social worker previously but is now closed. New information about a child who is part of an already open case does not constitute a new referral for the purpose of this indicator.

*Chart 3 – number and proportion of re-referrals within 12 months
blue indicates re-referrals*



7. Chart 3 shows that the proportion of re-referrals in Northumberland has reduced in 2021, with the overall calendar year figure being 16% (compared to 21% in 2020).

¹ Early Help is about working with children, young people and their families who would like support. It is a consent-based service which involves the whole family and their Networks to come up with solutions to any difficulties or challenges experienced at the time.

² ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 7 2019/20 –

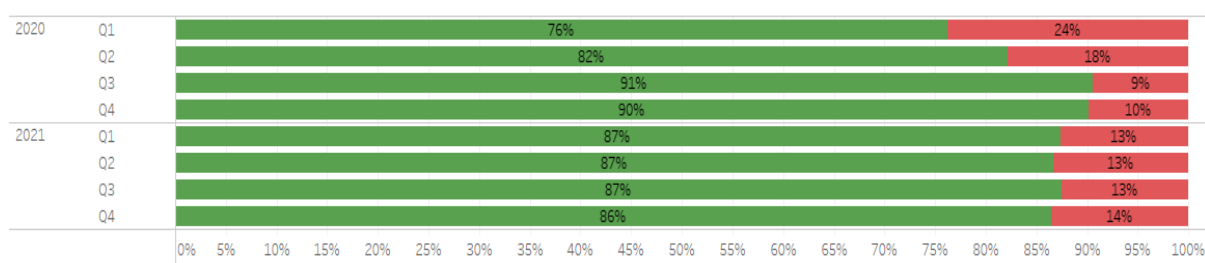
https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation//ADCS_Safeguarding_Pressures_Phase7_FINAL.pdf

³ Latest estimate of under 18 year olds is 58,801

This reduced figure is generally seen as a positive reflection on children receiving the right service at the right time, and that when cases are closed, families can sustain the successes that led to case closure without ongoing social worker support. Both the national and regional re-referral figures in 2020/21 were around 21%.

8. The vast majority of referrals (98%) lead to an assessment by a social worker within the 'front door'. The child and family (C & F) assessment was introduced across England in March 2014, and it allows social workers to gather information about a child and their family in order to assess what services are needed, and who should provide them. There is an expectation that this assessment should be completed within 45 working days of the referral being accepted.

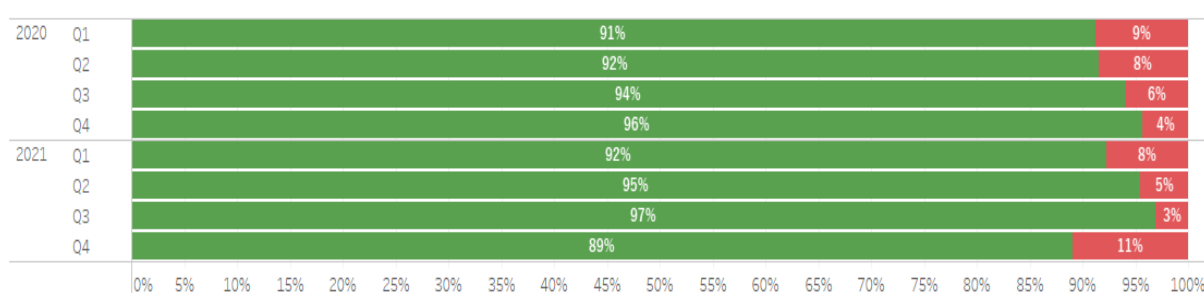
*Chart 4 – proportion of 'front door' assessments completed within 45 working days
Green = within 45 working days, red = over 45 working days*



9. Chart 4 shows that performance with regards to assessments being completed by the 'front door' has remained steady across 2021, with between 86% and 87% being completed within the 45 working days in each quarter. Overall, performance has improved from 84% in 2020 to 87% in 2021, which is just below the latest national figure of 88% and above the latest regional figure of 83%.
10. Where the information gathered during a contact, referral or assessment results in the social worker suspecting that a child is suffering (or likely to suffer) significant harm, a strategy discussion meeting should be held to determine whether to initiate enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. A multi-agency assessment is the means by which Section 47 enquiries are carried out and this should be completed within a maximum of 15 working days. In 2021, Northumberland completed 990 Section 47 enquiries, which equates to a rate of 168 per 10,000 children – broadly in line with the national rate of 164 and below the regional rate of 237. 95% of the Section 47 enquiries concluded in 2021 were completed within the 15 working days (no national or regional comparisons are available for this measure).
11. If the outcome of a Section 47 enquiry concludes that the original concerns were substantiated (meaning that the child is judged to be suffering (or likely to suffer) significant harm), then an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) should be held within 15 working days of the date when the Section 47 enquiry was initiated. The purpose of the ICPC is to bring together family members, the child (where appropriate) and key professionals to share information, assess risks and then

come up with an agreed way to keep the child safe. 60% (593) of the 990 children who were subject to a Section 47 enquiry in 2021 were subject to an ICPC – a higher proportion than the national figure of 37% and the regional figure of 43%. Although the figure is higher, Northumberland’s appliance of thresholds is scrutinised regularly through audit, which has given assurance that they are being applied appropriately and not intervening unnecessarily.

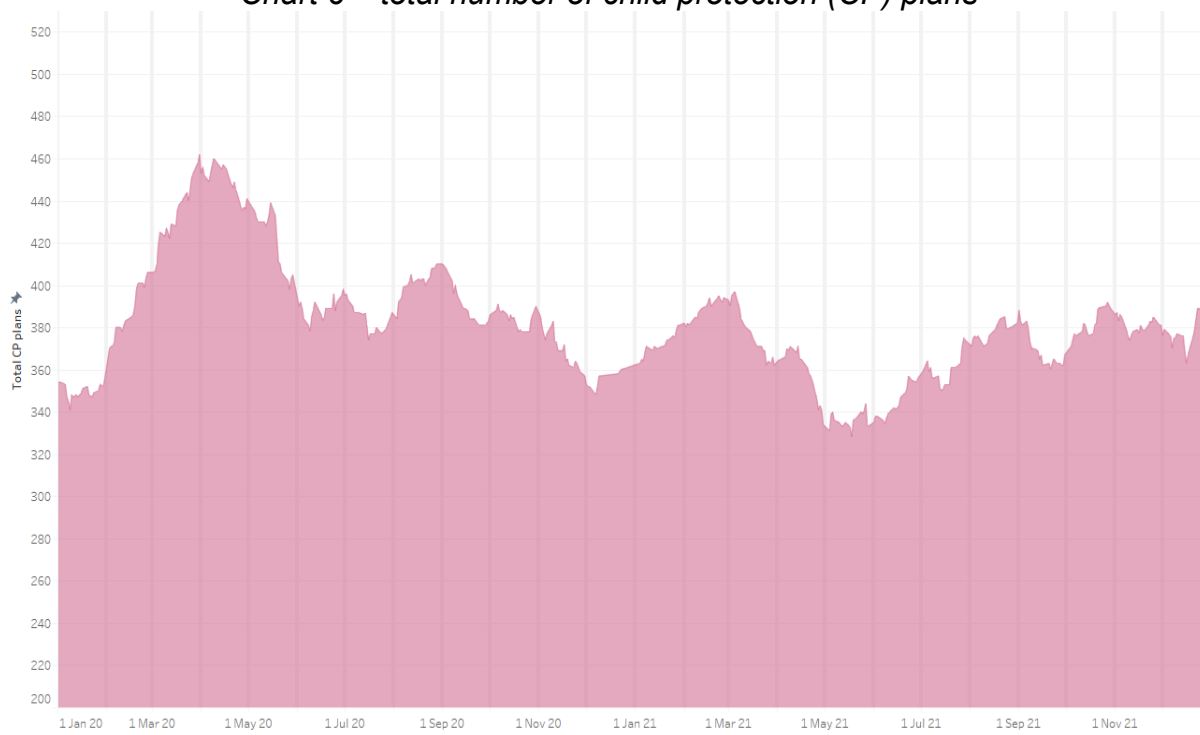
Chart 5 – proportion of ICPCs held within 15 working days of strategy discussion
Green = within 45 working days, red = over 45 working days



12. Chart 5 shows the timeliness of ICPCs held over the last eight quarters. Although performance has reduced to 89% in the most recent quarter, this figure is better than the most recent national figure of 83% and the most recent regional figure of 86%.
13. Of the 593 children subject to an ICPC in 2021, 90% (535) commenced a child protection plan. This is a similar proportion to 2020 (91%) and is roughly in line with the latest national (88%) and regional (90%) averages. A child protection plan outlines the nature of the concerns, and sets out what needs to be done to ensure that the child is safe and prevent them from suffering further harm. Equating the 535 children to the under eighteen population gives a rate of 91 child protection plans starting per 10,000 children; a higher rate than the latest national rate (53), and in line with the latest regional rate (91).
14. One way to look at the success of child protection plans is to monitor the proportion of children who are made subject to second or subsequent plans. A higher proportion of children with multiple plans would suggest that the decision to end a plan was premature or that the child protection process is not effective in bringing about lasting improvements for children. Of the 535 children who started a child protection plan in 2021, 24% (129) had previously had a plan, which is a reduced rate from 2020 (27%) but is slightly above the latest national and regional figures (of 22% and 21% respectively). This figure is closely monitored, with increases leading to a themed audit of cases to investigate whether plans were started appropriately.
15. During the course of a child protection plan, there are regular review conferences held to monitor how the plan is progressing, and if a child is judged to no longer be at continuing risk of harm then the plan will end. 99% of these reviews were held in

timescale in Northumberland, compared to 93% across England and 91% in the North East. Across 2021, there were 505 child protection plans ended, which equates to a rate of 86 per 10,000 children – above the latest national figure of 54 and below the latest regional figure of 93. The duration of child protection plans can vary, but plans should aim to be completed within two years (although it is recognised that some children will need plans for longer than this). Of the plans that ended in 2021, only one plan ended beyond two years (0.2%); compared to 4% nationally and 2% regionally.

Chart 6 – total number of child protection (CP) plans

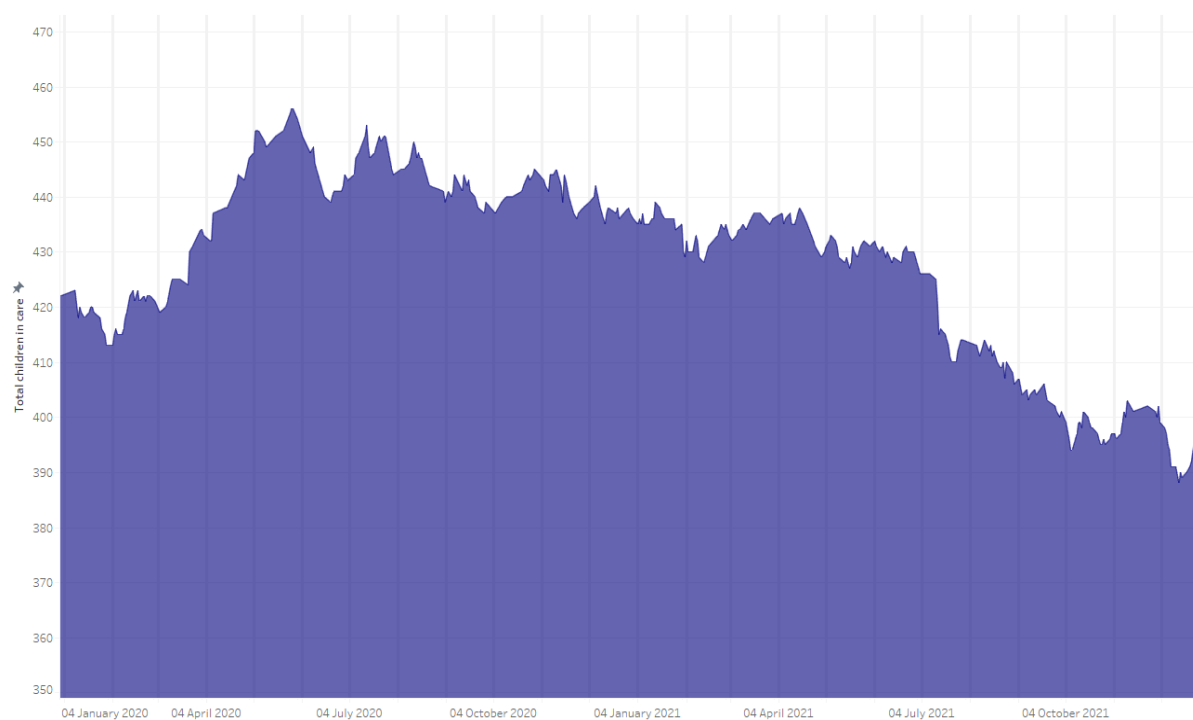


16. Chart 6 shows the total number of child protection plans since the start of 2020. There was an increase in the first quarter of 2020, with the numbers peaking at 462 in March 2020 due to a higher-than-average number of plans starting coupled with a lower than average number of plans ending. The numbers then generally decreased to 348 in December 2020 before increasing to 397 in March 2021. Due to higher-than-average numbers of plans ending in March and April 2021, the total reduced to 328 and since then has slowly increased to 388 at the end of December 2021. Converting this to a rate gives a figure of 66 child protection plans per 10,000 children; which is higher than the national rate of 41, but in line with the regional rate of 67.

CHILDREN IN CARE

17. Where it is necessary to take immediate action to protect a child, or where parents are unable to care for children (and there are no agreed alternative family to do this), a child may enter the care of the local authority.

Chart 7 – total number of children in care



18. Chart 7 shows the number of children who were being cared for by the local authority since the start of 2020. The numbers increased to 456 between January and May 2020 and then have slowly decreased to a figure of 400 at the end of December 2021. Converting this to a rate gives a figure of 68 children in care per 10,000: in line with the national rate of 67 and below the regional rate of 108.
19. A panel of senior managers meet regularly to assess and oversee the children who may need to enter care, and this 'gatekeeping' arrangement has been successful in accommodating children after suitable appropriate alternatives have been fully considered. For children who are in care, their plans for permanency are considered as part of the reviews held by an independent reviewing officer, and permanency clinics have been set up with social work team managers to monitor their progress.
20. The stability of a child's placement is important to help them build security in their lives by developing secure attachments, to support their ability to form relationships in the future as adults, and also to help them develop a strong sense of belonging

and identity⁴.

21. There are two indicators of performance that look specifically at placement stability. The first indicator looks at the proportion of children in care who have experienced three or more placements within the previous year. 9% of Northumberland's children in care experienced this number of placements. This is in line with the latest national figure and slightly worse than the latest regional figure (8%).
22. The second indicator looks at the cohort of children below the age of 16 who have been in care for at least two and a half years. Of the children in the cohort, the indicator looks at the proportion who have been in the same placement for at least two years (or are living with prospective adopters). At the end of December 2021, Northumberland's figure was 68%: worse than the latest national average of 70% but slightly better than the latest regional average of 67%.
23. A task and finish group was set up in early 2021 to look specifically at placement stability, with further data analysis and an audit of the placement moves finding that two thirds of 5 to 9 year olds and two fifths of the 13 to 15 year olds who moved were for positive reasons (for example, moving to a long-term placement). December 2021's figure of 68% above has reduced from 70% in September, and is due to some of the children who were living with prospective adopters now being adopted.
24. Permanence in the context of children in care is defined in the Children Act 1989 as providing children with:

'a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity ... a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond'

Permanence can be reached through different pathways:
 - a return to birth parents
 - shared care arrangements
 - permanence whilst in care as part of a residential placements, long-term unrelated foster carer or friends and family care
 - legal permanence via adoption, special guardianship or child arrangement orders
25. With regards to permanency for Northumberland's children in care, in the calendar year 2021, 22% (44) of the 203 children who left care were adopted; with this figure being higher than both the national and regional figures of 10% and 13% respectively. A further 23% of children who left care were subject to a special guardianship order (higher than the national average of 14%), with 29% of children returning home to birth parents (also higher than the national average of 25%).
26. As part of the children looked after (CLA) return that is submitted to the Department of Education, there are a number of annual 'outcome' indicators that are published. In the reporting year ending March 2021 (2020/21):
 - 75% of children in care were up to date with their immunisations (compared to

⁴ The Care Inquiry, "Making not Breaking – Building Relationships for our Most Vulnerable Children" – April 2013

86% nationally and 89% regionally).

- 29% of children in care had their teeth checked (compared to 40% nationally and 43% regionally).

- 93% of children in care had an annual health assessment (compared to 91% nationally and 94% regionally).

- All children under five had an assessment of their development (compared to 89% nationally and 92% regionally).

- 3% of children in care had a substance misuse problem identified (compared to 3% nationally and regionally).

- 1.5% of children in care aged ten or above were convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand (compared to 2% nationally and 3% regionally).

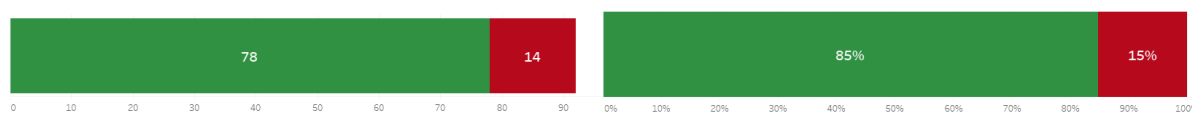
- 6.5% of children in care had at least one missing episode (compared to 10% nationally and regionally) with an average of five missing episodes per child (compared to seven on average nationally and six on average regionally).

27. Both indicators measuring the proportion of children in care immunised and getting their teeth checked have reduced compared to the statistical year 2019/20 due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. In each of the previous six reporting years, both of these indicators have been in line with or better than the national averages.
28. When children leave care after the age of 16, if they have been in care for at least thirteen weeks since the age of 14 then they become a 'care leaver'. Care leavers are young people who the local authority must continue to keep in touch with, maintain their pathway plan (a document that sets out how services will be provided to respond to young person's needed), and to help them achieve the goals within it. The support must go on until the young person turns 21 (or 25 if the young person wishes).
29. As part of the same CLA return submitted to the Department of Education, there are a number of indicators that monitor care leaver's outcomes across an older (19 to 21 year old) and younger (17 to 18 year old) cohort. In the reporting year ending March 2021 (2020/21):
- 97% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in touch with their link worker (compared to 91% nationally and 93% regionally).
 - 96% of care leavers aged 17 to 18 were in touch with their link worker (compared to 94% nationally and 96% regionally).
 - 95% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were living in suitable accommodation (compared to 88% nationally and 91% regionally).
 - 94% of care leavers aged 17 to 18 were living in suitable accommodation (compared to 91% nationally and 94% regionally).
 - 52% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in employment, education or training in the period around their birthday (compared to 52% nationally and 50 regionally).
 - 8% of care leavers aged 19 to 21 were in higher education (compared to 6% nationally and 7% regionally).
 - 64% of care leavers aged 17 to 18 were in employment, education or training in the period around their birthday period (compared to 65% nationally and 63% regionally).

SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE

30. All local authorities must submit detailed information about their social work workforce to the Department for Education each year. The collection provides details of the workers they employ and a snapshot of agency workers employed by local authorities. The return looks at the period between October and September, with the headlines from the year ending September 2021 being:
- Northumberland's staff turnover rate increased from 15% in 2020 to 17% in 2021: above the latest national rate of 14% and the latest regional rate of 12%.
 - The proportion of agency social workers in Northumberland increased from 9% in 2020 to 10% in 2021: below the latest national figure of 15% and in line with the latest regional average.
 - Northumberland's vacancy rate increased from 10% in 2020 to 12% in 2021: below the latest national rate of 16% and above the latest regional rate of 8%.
 - The absence rate of Northumberland's social work workforce increased slightly from 3% in 2020 to 4% in 2021. This is now above the latest national and regional rates of 3% (although it is anticipated that when these are updated for 2021, there will be an increase in these figures).
31. Social worker caseloads are monitored as part of performance clinics, with an innovative workload weighting system developed between the social work team managers and the Children's Services Performance team to take into account the different types of cases (and associated complexity) as well as the number of families in each worker's caseload, numbers of children, the location of the family (for the travel time), and any additional legal work that a worker is undertaking.
32. Each worker is then given a workload weighting score, with a score of 100 to 105 meaning a worker is working at full capacity. At the time of writing, 78 of 92 social workers (85%) in the county were working to capacity. This figure includes agency social workers and advanced practitioners but excludes social work support assistants and student social workers. Workers with high workload weighting scores are appropriately challenged by the relevant team and senior managers as part of the performance clinic discussions.

Chart 8 – number and percentage of social workers working to capacity
Green indicates worker is within capacity, red indicates worker is over capacity



33. Where social work staff are absent, systems are in place to ensure that their work trays within the integrated children's system (ICS) can be picked up, checked and actioned by another worker or team manager.

Implications

| | |
|--|--|
| Policy | Performance and monitoring of social work activity is a key part of safeguarding children. |
| Finance and value for money | Figures provided in this report allow officers and Members to monitor workloads and activity to ensure resources are allocated appropriately. |
| Legal | The report includes information relating to children who are in care, with a number of these being subject to care proceedings in accordance with Section 31 of the Children Act 1989. |
| Procurement | None. |
| Human Resources | The council should continue to monitor the impact of resource investments with regards to workloads to ensure effective targeting to support staff and to improve performance. At present, there is a national focus on supervision, training and stress-levels of social workers. |
| Property | None. |
| Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Risk Assessment | Children's Services should prioritise and respond to children who are most at risk of significant harm. |
| Crime & Disorder | The prevalence of domestic abuse and substance misuse are monitored during case reviews, and influence workload management decisions. |
| Customer Consideration | The data in the report indicates the extent to which service user's needs are being met. |
| Carbon reduction | None. |
| Health and Wellbeing | The report highlights activity to safeguard children, which in the long-term will promote better health and wellbeing. |
| Wards | None. |

Background papers:

Lord Laming – The Victoria Climbié Inquiry.
Lord Laming – The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report
Findings and recommendations of the Care Inquiry 2013
ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Report Phase 7

Report sign off

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

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Briefing Note to FACS

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Directorate: | Children’s Services: Education and Skills |
| Subject: | School Transport Review |
| Date: | 3rd February 2022 |

Purpose of Briefing Note

To inform the Executive and Families and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny committee of the forth coming review of the school transport arrangements at Northumberland County Council.

To ask the Executive officers to review the tasks identified to undertake the review.

Background

School transport within the Council has had a number of challenges throughout the pandemic to consider above the usual transport routines. The budget for SEN transport has been significantly underestimated and the Families and Children’s OSC have requested a review of the governance of school transport.

The terms of reference are set out below and the initial tasks identified. Within the terms of reference, a capture of initial aspects of exploration have been considered, it is anticipated that there may be further aspects emerging (opportunities) and these will be explored ongoing and form part of the review.

A time phased approach is proposed with a review update to the Acting Deputy Chief Executive at each phase end. A summary report will be provided to Executives and FACS with summary recommendations proposed to be received at the June 2022* FACS committee.

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

1.1 The Passenger Transport team are currently based in the Planning and Local Services Directorate – the schools transport service is within the passenger transport team.

1.2 The Passenger Transport team covers:

- Mainstream School transport
- School transport for SEND children (with eligibility determined by SEND team)
- Post 16 school transport
- Public Transport Supported Bus Services and other aspects of Public Transport
- Transport for Adult Social Care (with eligibility determined by ASC team)
- Transport for Children's Social Care (with eligibility determined by CSC team)

1.3 There have been a number of discussions and queries raised about where the service would best fit and whether this would best fit within Children's Services.

2. Budget

2.1 The current School Transport budget is: £9,230,550. The SEN school transport budget is £7,123,530 and is held by the SEN team with transport co-ordinated and planned by PTT.

- Mainstream school transport (budget held by Passenger Transport Team)
- Post 16 transport (budget held by Passenger Transport Team)

(The Passenger Transport team also manages budgets for ASC transport, CSC transport and Public Transport Supported Bus Services)

3. Tasks

Phase 1- by Feb 27th 2022

3.1 Review of current school transport policies to determine if scope and application is reflective of regulation and guidance.

3.2 As part of the review, identify whether there are constraints that need a policy direction.

3.3 Review SEND transport policy and determine if scope and application is reflective of regulation and guidance.

3.4 Identify whether there are constraints that need a policy direction or a systems approach and make recommendations

Phase 2 – by February 27th 2022

3.5 Review of safeguarding processes and checks.

3.6 Review of appeals process and compliance with regulation.

Phase 3- by March 10th 2022

3.7 Consider transport needs of ASC/ CSC and whether efficiency/ greater VFM can be achieved

Phase 4- by April 10th 2022

3.8 Review of resources which support all areas of school transport, looking at:

- Staffing
- Determination of Eligibility for Transport and transport needs
- Commissioning process / contract management and practice
- Budget planning/setting and forecasting models

Phase 5- by May 16th 2022

3.9 Consider where service best fits and link with other directorates and services. Within this consideration provide any systems recommendations as well as modelling and practice to support the service including exploration of transport models and identify any single points of success/ failure.

Proposals to be considered with Acting Exec Director for Planning and Local Services and Lead members in both Children's Services and Local Services portfolio updates by Executive members – CMC to agree.

4. Resource Allocation

4.1 Lead: Audrey Kingham working with David Laux and Mark Cusack plus Neil Dorward to support the policy analysis, flow chart production and review reporting, Specialist staffing and teams will be included for aspects of the review such as safeguarding and HR.

Final report to Acting Deputy Chief Executive May 20th 2022.

Recommendations

Executive officers and The Families and Children's Overview and Scrutiny review the tasks as set out and confirm they are the correct tasks to complete the review

Consider whether any additional tasks should be added to the current terms of reference

Key Issues

- The review will examine throughout the approaches as to whether the operations is sufficiently child and family centred and meet needs
- The review will examine budget planning and co-produced work such as SEN transport. SEN Transport budget has been overspent for at least two budget years, the review will examine planning and forecasting systems and models for SEN transport.

- Policy and Direction will be considered alongside implementation and communication of all systems and processes including safeguarding, contracting, forecasting and planning.
- The review will examine whether there are opportunities to consider transport models, best value of the budget available, development of integrated school and wider service transport arrangements including digital supporting infrastructures.
- The review will consider whether the transport service is futureproofed and whether there is a plan to address 'meeting needs closer to home' for children including the transport service and aspects of environmental considerations in the transport infrastructure.
- Is the service located in the 'best fit' for an integrated service to meet the needs of children and families?

* subject to a full and timely contribution and schedule and engagement from all resources to support the completion of the review.

Report Author

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22 February 2022 - CA

Agenda Item 9

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

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

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

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

ISSUES TO BE SCHEDULED/CONSIDERED

Regular updates:

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

Issues to be raised:

Themed Scrutiny:

Issues to be scheduled:

School Capital Investment
Children Permanently Excluded from School/Elective Home Education
Education (Guidance about the cost of School Uniforms) Act 2021

**Northumberland County Council
Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021 - 2022**

3 March 2022

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Page 162 | <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>School Transport Governance Arrangements</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> <p>Review of the current governance arrangements for school transport providers and staff.</p> <p>To summarise an evidence-based cost proposal to prepare Kirkley Hall equestrian area in readiness to accept Morpeth Group RDA as a base for their ongoing operation.</p> |
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| | <p>PRE-SCRUTINY:- RDA relocation from Tranwell (Pegasus Centre) to Kirkley Hall Campus (Northumberland College)</p> | <p>(Confidential report)</p> |
| <p>7 April 2022</p> | | |
| <p>Page 163</p> | <p>PRE-SCRUTINY:- Report on Berwick Partnership Organisation</p> <p>Development of Family Hubs</p> <p>Annual Report of Principle Social Worker</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>Update for members on the development and progress of family hubs in Northumberland.</p> <p>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.</p> |

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

| Ref | Date | Report | Decision | Outcome |
|----------|------------------|---|--|---|
| Page 164 | 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. |
| 24 | 17 June 2021 | Winter Support Grant Update | RESOLVED that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The content of the report and the successful implementation of the initiatives undertaken with the funding from the Winter Support Grant be noted. 2. The strategy, roll-out and benefits of the activities for children and young people organised through the Holiday Activity Fund across Northumberland during the Easter Holiday be noted. | No further action |
| 3 | 2 September 2021 | Schools Forum Role and Decision Making Powers | RESOLVED that the report be noted | No further action |

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| 4 | 2 September 2021 | SEND Revisit | <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 |

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| 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. |

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| 18 | 2 December 2021 | Northumberland Skills Pathfinder - Curriculum Research | <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <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. | At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments. |
| 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. |
| 20 | 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. |
| 22 | 3 February 2022 | School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2023/2024 Academic Year | RESOLVED that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report. | At its meeting on 8 February, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments. |

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| 23 | 3 February 2022 | Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021 | RESOLVED that the education achievements of looked after children and the ongoing challenges caused by the disruption to education during the pandemic be noted. | No further action |
| 24 | 3 February 2022 | Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (NSSP) Annual Report | RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted. | No further action |
| 25 | 3 February 2022 | Adult Learning Service Annual Report: Learning and Skills Service | RESOLVED that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The content of the annual report be noted. 2. The approach to developing the Northumberland curriculum models to enhance the learning experience and support students to acquire the skills and knowledge to be successful in life be endorsed. 3. The performance given the continuing challenges of the global pandemic against operating circumstances and the valuable support provided to all learners with all services be recognised. 4. The progress in respect of the improvement actions set out in the 2019/20 report be noted. 5. The identified areas for improvement and the routines established to monitor progress be agreed. | No further action |

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| 26 | 3 February 2022 | Sufficiency Strategy | RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy be noted. | No further action |
| 27 | 3 February 2022 | Home Builds Progress | RESOLVED that the information be noted. | No further action |
| 28 | 3 February 2022 | Annual Engagement Statement | RESOLVED that the information be noted. | No further action |
| 29 | 3 February 2022 | OFSTED Inspection Framework | RESOLVED that the information and range of inspections be noted. | No further action |

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