

# Public Document Pack



## Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:** Lesley Little

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**Tel direct:** 01670 622614

**Date:** Tuesday 29 March 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, 7 APRIL 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, A Dale, W Daley (Chair), R Dodd (Vice-Chair), C Dunbar, L Dunn, Fairless-Aitken, 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 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.***



**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. 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](mailto:monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk). Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

#### **3. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

(Pages 1  
- 4)

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

#### **CABINET REPORT FOR PRE-SCRUTINY**

#### **4. BERWICK PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATION**

(Pages 5  
- 22)

The Cabinet report sets out the findings of the 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. Cabinet is also being asked to permit a first stage of informal consultation with wider stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership schools to establish whether 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. Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the report on 12 April 2022.

## **REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCRUTINY**

- 5. FAMILY HUBS IN NORTHUMBERLAND** (Pages 23 - 28)
- The report provides an update on the work that Children's Social Care and a range of partners are currently undertaking to establish Family Hubs in Northumberland.
- 6. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER** (Pages 29 - 52)
- The report advises and updates the Scrutiny Committee about the input and work of the Principal Social Worker in 2021 and an overview of the quality of practice and development needs of frontline social workers.
- 7. NCC DIGITAL WORKFORCE & DIGITAL WORK-BASED SKILLS** (Pages 53 - 60)
- The report advises the Committee of plans to accelerate the delivery of digital work-based skills within Northumberland County. The proposal has internal and external facing objectives in developing digital work-based skills across the County of Northumberland to the advantage of residents and businesses but also providing a mechanism for NCC to build and sustain its own digital workforce within the area of Information Services and other areas with growing volumes of digital functions.
- 8. FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2021/22** (Pages 61 - 70)
- Members are asked to review and note the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report.
- 9. URGENT BUSINESS**

**IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST AT THIS MEETING, PLEASE:**

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

<b>Name (please print):</b>
<b>Meeting:</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>
<b>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):</b>
<b>Nature of Non-registerable Personal Interest (please give details):</b>
<b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>

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

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

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

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

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

The following are other Registerable Personal Interests:

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

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

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

### **3. Non-participation in Council Business**

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

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

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

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## Forward Plan

### FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS APRIL TO JULY 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p><b>Adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036)</b>                      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 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>		29 March 2022 Council 30 March 2022
<p><b>NEHL Reserved Matters Approval</b>                      Cabinet will be requested to approve a course of action that is a matter reserved to Northumberland County Council as Shareholder under the Articles of Association of its wholly-owned group companies Northumberland Enterprise Holdings Ltd (“NEHL”) and Northumbria Integrated Consultancy Ltd (“NIC”). The Boards of NEHL and NIC have agreed to a course of action that can only be executed with Shareholder approval.                      (Confidential report)                      (R. Wearmouth/William Thompson – 07929836782)</p>		29 March 2022

<p><b>Blyth Relief Road</b>  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"> <li>- Route alignment proposals</li> <li>- Key information from the Outline Business Case</li> <li>- Next steps</li> </ul> <p>(W. Ploszaj/S. McNaughton 07827 873139)</p>	<p>CSEG 11 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022</p>
<p><b>Berwick Partnership Organisation</b>  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 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>FACS 7 April 2022</p>	<p>12 April 2022  Council 4 May 2022</p>
<p><b>Procurement of Specialist Dementia Service</b></p>		<p>12 April 2022</p>



<p>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.</p> <p>(W. Pattison/Neil Bradley 01670 622868)</p>		
<p><b>Biodiversity Net Gain and New Burdens Funding</b></p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 introduces significant changes to the way in which planning applications will be determined by imposing a requirement to demonstrate a net gain in the value of habitats as a result of the development process, achieved through their creation on or off the development site. The Act imposes a range of new duties for Local Planning Authorities to oversee, verify and monitor this process. This report sets out the resource implications for the Planning Service arising from the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain, the new burdens funding being provided by Defra and the uncertainties created by that, and explores options to address these.</p> <p>(C. Horncastle/D. Feige 01670 622653)</p>		10 May 2022
<p><b>Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2022-25</b></p> <p>To update on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure and proposals for increasing provision across the next three years.</p> <p>(G. Sanderson/ Matt Baker 07957 385638)</p>	TBC	10 May 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2021-22 – Provisional Outturn 2021-22</b></p>		7 June 2022

<p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue financial position as at Provisional Outturn for the Council against the Budget for 2021-22 (R. Wearmouth/S. Dent 01670 625515)</p>		
<p><b>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2021-22 - Position at the end of March 2022</b> 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
<p><b>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b> 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



## Northumberland County Council

### **CABINET**

**Date: 12 April 2022**

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### **BERWICK PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATION**

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

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

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out the findings of the 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 a first stage of informal consultation with wider stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership schools to establish whether 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. Other key areas such as Special Educational Needs, post-16 and early years provision would also be included as part of this first stage of wider phase of consultation.

### **Recommendations**

#### **It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 1) Approve the first stage of a planned 2-stage informal consultation process with the wider stakeholders of the Berwick area on the following key areas:
  - a. Whether any future models of organisation for schools in the Berwick Partnership should be based on a 3-tier organisation only or a 2-tier model of organisation;
  - b. The need for an improved SEND offer for the Berwick area;
  - c. The need for an improved Early Years offer for the Berwick Area;
  - d. The need for the development of a Post-16 and Post-18 provision in the Berwick area;

- e. Whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain part of the Berwick Partnership or be included in the Alnwick Partnership.
- 2) Note the analysis of the outcomes of this first stage of informal consultation would be reported to Cabinet, and also a request to carry out the second planned stage of informal consultation on detailed proposals for individual schools within a wider school reorganisation of the Berwick Partnership may be included. Such proposals in the second planned stage of informal consultation may include possible school closures.
  - 3) Note that local authorities do not have powers to propose or change the organisation of academies; therefore, any proposed changes to the organisation of Berwick Academy as part of a wider partnership reorganisation would need to be consulted on by the Trustees of the Academy and taken to the Regional Schools Commissioner for a decision.
  - 4) Note should Cabinet approve a second stage of consultation, the outcomes presented to Cabinet may include a recommendation to permit the publication of statutory proposals in relation to relevant maintained schools.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report directly links to the Council's Corporate aim 'Living, Learning - We will ensure the best education standards for our children and young people.'

### **Key Issues**

1. The Council has allocated £39.896 million in capital funding within its Medium Term financial Plan for capital investment in education within the Berwick partnership of schools.
2. Before committing to such investment in these schools, Cabinet will want to be assured that the organisational structure within the Berwick Partnership is viable and sustainable in the medium to long-term through the retention of the majority of students in all phases, and that the agreed structure is the most likely to lead to improved educational outcomes for all children and young people in the Berwick area.
3. In order to identify the most likely structures to provide such assurance, officers have been working with the headteachers in their capacity as educational professionals and school governors since April 2021. Over the last year, this work has included meetings with these groups at the partnership and individual school levels; themed workshops with headteachers on a number of possible models of organisation including the current 3-tier model structure have also taken place. In addition to the question of which is the most appropriate structure for the partnership, another issue for discussion arose which was whether certain schools should remain as part of the Berwick Partnership at all or whether it was more relevant for them to join other partnerships in the future.
4. Throughout the work undertaken with the Berwick Partnership, headteachers and school governors understood that whatever structure was ultimately agreed,

this possibly would have to be within the context of some other fundamental changes, such as a reduction in the current number of schools in the partnership, including some schools moving to other partnerships as noted at para. 3. The issues facing the partnership that would require some of these changes are set out in the Background to this report.

5. A high-level survey was also carried out with the wider Berwick Partnership community in Autumn 2021 to gauge their key priorities when considering school organisation in the area and to assist in formulating the next steps in the process. The results of this survey are also included in the Background to this report.
6. A detailed summary of these activities and the feedback received is set out in the Background to this report. Overall, the analysis of this feedback suggests there are two preferred models of organisation most likely to achieve long-term viability and sustainability for education in the partnership, which are the current 3-tier structure or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. This conclusion has been reached as a result of the views of schools on the potential positives and challenges of a 2-tier system in the partnership (see para. 17, 19 and 20) where there was a mixed response, with 9 Governing Bodies in support of 2-tier, 4 against and 3 unsure or undecided.
7. In the light of this conclusion and the potential for other changes within the final structure as noted above, it is recommended that in order to inform detailed models of school organisation for consultation, the next step in this process should be to carry out high level informal consultation with the parents, staff, pupils and the wider community of the Berwick Partnership area on the benefits and rationale for both the 3-tier structure and the 2-tier structure in order to establish whether there is a general preference for either, and whether they have any views on the potential for some schools to become part of other partnerships.
8. Should Cabinet approve Recommendation 1, a period of informal consultation (stage 1) would take place beginning on 23 May and concluding on 23 July. The consultation would include the development of a consultation document made available electronically via the Council's Citizen Space facility in the first instance and also two public events within the period, one to be held in the north and one further south in the partnership.
9. The results of this stage 1 informal consultation would be brought to Cabinet at a later date, at which point approval for the second planned stage of informal consultation on detailed models of organisation for maintained schools in the Berwick Partnership may be requested. The outcomes of any stage 2 informal consultation may also include a request to publish statutory proposals for relevant maintained schools.
10. Cabinet should note that local authorities do not have powers to change the organisational structure of academies, therefore any future proposals for organisational change to the structure of maintained schools in the Berwick Partnership would need to be made with the agreement of the Trustees of Berwick Academy to carry out parallel consultation on any changes for the structure of the academy.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Issues facing Berwick Partnership

#### 11. Education Outcomes

**First School Phase:** Key Stage 1 (KS1) assessments, which are taken by children at the end of Year 2, are not published. However, 12 of the 13 first schools are graded Outstanding or Good, while Tweedmouth Prior Park First School is graded 'Requires Improvement', although it continues to be taking effective action.

**Middle School Phase:** Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments did not take place in 2020 and 2021, therefore the last available data for Berwick Partnership from 2019. The percentage of students achieving the expected standard at KS2 in 2019 was 72% for Berwick Middle, 75% for Tweedmouth Middle and 63% for Glendale Middle. The Northumberland average in 2019 was 66%, while the England average was 65%. Therefore, the two Berwick town middles are well above average scores while Glendale Middle is just below (with a smaller cohort) and therefore generally the schools performed well at KS2. All 3 middle schools are currently graded 'Good' by Ofsted.

**High School Phase:** Berwick Academy was inspected by Ofsted in November 2021 and was graded as 'Requires Improvement', having previously been judged to be Inadequate.

The last verified outcomes at GCSE(Key Stage 4) for Berwick Academy were in summer 2019 as set out in Table 1. The DfE has stated that due to the unprecedented change in the way GCSE results (KS4) were awarded in the summer terms of 2020 and 2021 and the resulting significant changes to the distribution of the grades received (in comparison to exam results), pupil level attainment in 2020/21 and 2019/20 is not comparable to that of the previous exam years for the purposes of measuring changes in pupil performance. However, GCSE results for Berwick Academy for 2020 and 2021 are included in Table 1 for information purposes, but for the reasons explained it is not possible to produce a Northumberland or England average.

**Table 1 – GCSE results, Berwick Academy**

		GCSE 2019	GCSE 2020	GCSE 2021
Progress 8 (0 = Expected Progress)	Berwick Academy	-0.55	-0.26	Not available, but expected to make progress on 2020 results
	Northumberland average	-0.12	N/A	N/A
	England average	-0.03		
%Achieving Grade 5+ inc Eng and Maths	Berwick Academy	21%	35%	36%
	Northumberland average	43%	N/A	N/A
	England average	43%	N/A	N/A
Attainment 8 (higher figure is best)	Berwick Academy	38.9	43.8	41.8
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

However, GCSE examinations are planned to go ahead as normal for 2022 and Berwick Academy expects to see the recent improvement in 2020 and 2021 outcomes being sustained into this year's results.

As for GCSE results, 'A' level grades achieved by students in 2020 and 2021 cannot be directly compared to the last verified results in 2019 as a result of the alternative grade awarding methods. 'A' level results achieved by students in Berwick Academy are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2 – 2019 'A' level results, Berwick Academy**

Progress Score	-0.18 (Average for England)
Average result - Berwick Academy	D+, 22.5 points
Average result - Northumberland	C+, 32.5 points
Average result - England	C+, 34.01

Berwick Academy has reported that all university applicants in the 2020/21 cohort gained a place at one of their chosen universities, with 95% being placed at their first choice. Students seeking routes into employment and training were supported by staff throughout the lockdown period and most secured their next step.

12. Viability and Sustainability of schools in Berwick Partnership

Fewer children year on year are being born in the Berwick Partnership area. Table 3 is based on the number of children living in the partnership area at this time, and not the number on roll in Berwick schools. This demonstrates the continuing fall in the pupil population over time:

**Table 3**

Current Phase	Average cohort size
High School (Year 9 to 11)	221
Middle School (Year 5 to 8)	222
First School (Reception to Year 4)	200
Reception 2022 to Reception 2025	165

In fact, the number of children living in the Berwick area who will require a place in Reception in 2025 is 150. With 278 places currently available in Berwick first schools there will be 128 surplus places in schools (assuming all pupils attend a local school); this is the equivalent of 4 forms of entry i.e. 4 classes of 30 children.

Compounding the falling pupil population is the current flow of pupils out of the partnership at the middle and high school phases in particular. Table 4 shows the number of pupils resident in the Berwick area who attend schools in Alnwick,

Scotland and the private sector (pupils attending special schools or elective home education are not included).

**Table 4**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Attending Alnwick Schools</b>	<b>Attending Scottish Schools</b>	<b>Attending Private Schools</b>	<b>Total</b>
High (Yr9-11)	103	48	32	183
Middle	27 (5 in primary)	32 (14 in primary)	35	94
First	28	3	9	40

The above data equates to 28% of high school (Year 9 to Year 11) students living in the Berwick area choosing to attend other schools, as shown above. Of students in the Berwick area of middle school age, 10% choose to attend these schools; at first school phase, just 4% of pupils living in the Berwick area attend these schools. In economic terms, at high school phase these student numbers equates to around £915k while at middle school phase this equate to £470k. Of course, there will be a variety of reasons why students attend certain schools, for example distance from home being a factor, while some parents would send their children to private schools in any event. However, some feedback received during the informal meetings with schools and via the community survey indicates there is a level of dissatisfaction with the offer at high school phase and some parents are choosing an alternative pathway even earlier in their children's educational journey. The high level informal consultation on the proposed school organisation models recommended in this report would provide further information on this issue.

13. Special educational needs

Cabinet will already be aware from relevant reports, most recently in relation to the proposal to relocate and expand numbers at Atkinson House Special School, that due to the increase in children and young people in Northumberland and nationally being assessed to have special educational needs (SEND), there is an increasing strategic requirement to plan and provide additional specialist places and/or specialist support for this group of vulnerable students within the county over the coming years.

The work carried out with the Berwick Partnership over the last 12 months supports this requirement and it is proposed that any investment in educational structure in the partnership should include proposals for additional SEND provision within the Berwick area to provide the specialist support needed for relevant children and young people within or closer to their local community.

There are currently 102 students resident in the Berwick area who have been allocated an Education and Health Care Plan, which equates to 3.8% of the school age population in Berwick; this is very close to the county average of 4%. 58 of these students attend a special school and 44 are supported in a mainstream school or academy. In relation to the 58 students attending specialist provision, 36 attend The Grove School in Berwick; therefore 22 students in this group (38%) need to travel outside of the partnership to other special schools in the county or out of county. Furthermore, 12 of the 22 have a



primary need in autism, social emotional and mental health or speech, language and communication, which are the 3 categories increasing most rapidly in the county.

14. Post-16 Educational Offer

The stage 1 informal consultation would also present the opportunity to collate the views of a wide range of stakeholders in relation to post-16 provision for young people living in the Berwick Partnership area beyond parents, schools and current students e.g. colleges, universities, local commerce and industry. Views would be sought on where the gaps in the post-16 offer currently lie, as well as ideas on how and where provision could be improved. These views would assist in shaping more detailed proposals to be put forward to stage 2 informal consultation.

15. Early Years

Currently, all first schools in Berwick Partnership offer some form of early years provision on site, whether as part of the maintained school, via Community Powers, or via an independent provider or community group. As part of the stage 1 informal consultation, it would be proposed to review whether the current Early Years provision is appropriate both in terms of quantity and quality of offer across the partnership.

**Process and feedback from work with the Berwick Partnership and the wider community survey**

16. The work carried out with the Berwick Partnership to gain views on possible models of organisation over the last year to address the issues set out in paras. 9-11 journeyed along the following timeline:

- **15 April 2021**  
Opening meeting between NCC officers, Heads and Chairs of Governors of Berwick Partnership schools, diocesan representatives and Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and DfE representatives. Initial 6 options put forward as starting point for discussions.
- **21 April – 25 May 2021**  
NCC officers conduct confidential meetings with headteacher and Chair of Governors of individual schools; CE diocesan representative attendant at some CE school meetings.
- **22 June 2021**  
Plenary meeting of NCC officers with headteachers and Chairs of Governors, diocesan representatives, RSC and DfE to share high level themes arising from individual meetings. 6 options suggested to be reduced to 4 as a result of feedback.
- **7 July 2021**  
Plenary meeting with attendance as noted above to plan workshops to refine the options and advise on content of planned survey with the staff/wider public.
- **7 September 2021**  
Briefing to local members on progress with partnership work.

- **14 September – 22 October 2021**  
Berwick staff/community survey asking for priorities for educational provision in the Berwick area.
- **22 September – 14 October**  
4 Workshops held with NCC officers, headteachers, CE diocese, RSC and FE representatives to refine/assess remaining 4 options further.
- **13 December 2021**  
NCC Officers met with heads and Chairs of Governors to agree Vision for Change and summarise outcomes of workshops. Agreement to seek each Governing Body's views on conclusions on the 4 options reached by headteachers by 21 January 2022.
- **14 March 2022**  
Proposed recommendation to carry out informal consultation on principle of 3-tier or 2-tier organisation conveyed to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and next steps.

17. Themes arising from assessment of original 6 options during individual school meetings April – May 2021

Following the full partnership meeting in April 2021, 6 potential models of organisation were discussed with the headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school/academy; these models were based on previous discussions with the partnership, including a model put forward to NCC by a group of schools. The models and the key themes are set out as reasons to support the model and areas for further consideration are set out in Table 5.

**Table 5**

	<b>Feedback – Reasons to support</b>	<b>Feedback - Areas to consider</b>
<p><b>Campus option</b> (option from Berwick heads) - Berwick Academy, Berwick Tweedmouth Middle schools, the Grove School and Tweedmouth Prior Park School, with post 16 provision being led by NALS, on to the site of the current high school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would create an educational and financially viable campus through economies of scale, and creation of capacity to improve if all schools academise.</li> <li>• Opportunity for The Grove to have new build.</li> <li>• Collaborative working, improved transition.</li> <li>• Opportunity to redesign curriculum to match national.</li> <li>• Positive about potential improvement of sixth form offer, need to retain students in Berwick</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community view too many schools on one site</li> <li>• Some first schools felt it would impact their viability if another first school had new build.</li> <li>• Age range on one site too wide (9year olds and 18 year olds)</li> <li>• First step towards full merger of schools.</li> <li>• Risk of losing individual schools identity</li> <li>• No middle school on North side of river, community won't like 9 year olds travelling</li> <li>• What would community view of wider academisation be?</li> <li>• Not sure this will resolve the issues and quickly enough.</li> <li>• Is this about saving money rather than beneficial educationally?</li> <li>• Logistics of so many schools on one site.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts choice of schools re middles.</li> <li>• Relies on co-operation of headteachers, if change of personnel it could impact negatively.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organisation option (primary/secondary) system</b> - Organisation of whole partnership to a primary secondary model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial benefit for firsts and academy as has additional year groups.</li> <li>• Fits with national curriculum, fewer transitions.</li> <li>• Some heads have experience of working in 2-tier</li> <li>• Retain children longer in village schools</li> <li>• Accountability for whole key stages</li> <li>• 3-tier out of sync with regional and national structure</li> <li>• High school could improve if get students in Year 7 rather than Year 9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First and middles all good,</li> <li>• Is the main issue with KS4 outcomes?</li> <li>• Some first schools wouldn't be able to change because of sites.</li> <li>• Need to improve schools before adding more year groups,</li> <li>• Some schools may have to close</li> <li>• 3-tier very popular with some schools and parents, works well</li> </ul>
<p><b>Single school option (age 9-18 school)</b> - Relocation of both Berwick Middle and Tweedmouth Middle Schools onto the Berwick Academy site to form a single academy for pupils age 9-18.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership schools could support each other to improve</li> <li>• Fewer transitions</li> <li>• Improves financial position</li> <li>• Could redesign curriculum to fit with National Curriculum</li> <li>• Specialists have more time to teach their own specialism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2 maintained middle schools would need to academise – how would the community feel?</li> <li>• Needs approval of Governing Bodies followed by approval of the RSC.</li> <li>• No current successful example to reference.</li> <li>• Doesn't solve issue of split key stages</li> <li>• Removes choice in relation to middles.</li> <li>• North and South of town divide – north left with nothing at secondary level.</li> <li>• Doesn't address first schools financial situation, so not a partnership-wide solution.</li> <li>• Age profile too wide 9 yos to 18 yos</li> <li>• No provision in Wooler after age 9.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Two middle schools option</b> – Both town middle schools combine into one school on Tweedmouth Middle site in new buildings and extend the age range to form a school for pupils age 9-16. Post 16 provision to be provided on the same site by the academy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retains good schools, facilities and outcomes</li> <li>• This option is likely to be popular in the community as it would be seen that secondary education comes back to local control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community may not be supportive of the relocation of Berwick Middle School.</li> <li>• Concerns about experience of Middle school staff to deliver secondary curriculum.</li> <li>• Lacks clarity around 6th form provision and transport</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A larger school will enable specialists to spend more time on their specialisms</li> <li>• KS4 specialists could teach Year 7/8</li> <li>• Financial benefits of larger school</li> <li>• Parental perception that middles are good retained</li> <li>• Opportunity to redesign the curriculum, perhaps change phases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern around head to head battle for students, schools not supportive of each other</li> <li>• Would need co-operation of existing academy and RSC to achieve effective transition.</li> <li>• Removes choice of middle school</li> <li>• Concern around community support for very large school, particular concerns around bringing together the younger pupils onto the same site as 18 year olds.</li> <li>• Focus would potentially be lost on Years 5 and 6</li> <li>• Disruption to pupils already in system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>New High School only option -</b> New school building for Berwick Academy only, could also include the closure of the academy and replace with a new free high school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children need something aspirational to work towards.</li> <li>• Improved perception of school</li> <li>• This is the model the community are expecting to hear about.</li> <li>• Needs new building</li> <li>• Could help with rebranding if a Free School.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need new building but this alone wouldn't address the issues of financial and education viability.</li> <li>• Won't change teaching and learning.</li> <li>• Model limited to only one school.</li> <li>• Chance to make a significant impact in the North could be missed.</li> <li>• How would SEND provision be improved in this model?</li> <li>• Would standards improve as a result?</li> <li>• Doesn't address financial issues of all schools</li> <li>• Missed opportunity to redesign curriculum to match national approaches</li> <li>• Majority of available funding spent on one school</li> <li>• Not clear how SEND offer would be improved</li> </ul>
<p><b>New Multi Academy Trust option -</b> set up MAT incorporating Berwick Academy, Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle schools and The Grove Special School. Berwick Middle site used for Years 5 and 6 provision. Tweedmouth Middle site used for KS3 provision (Years 7,8,9). Berwick Academy reduces age range becoming KS4 (Year 10 and 11). Special school on site of current Berwick Academy and review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAT could be applied to any model</li> <li>• Better transition</li> <li>• Single accountable body overall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools not involved in a MAT may feel isolated.</li> <li>• Could inclusion of another secondary/high school be supportive?</li> <li>• More transitions</li> <li>• Loss of identify of individual schools</li> <li>• How would the community feel about all schools being academies?</li> <li>• Needs agreement across a number of Governing Bodies</li> </ul>

<p>designation to include and ARP and SEMH provision.</p>		<p>to progress the process of academisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous experience of MATS amongst some is negative, loss of autonomy of individual schools and governing bodies.</li> </ul>
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In the light of the analysis of the feedback received from schools, it was clear at this stage that there was no clear favoured option within the partnership. However, it appeared that there was enough support for a number of the options to go forward for further discussion and development to the workshops planned with schools in September-October (see para. 15), which were:

- Campus model (as presented)
- Merge Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools and extend age up to age 16 (and potential variations)
- 2-tier reorganisation (and potential variations)
- Mixed economy of 2 and 3 tier – this new option emerged from the meetings with schools

Another emerging option from the meetings with schools was the potential for Wooler schools and Belford Primary to follow a different pathway, including becoming part of Alnwick Partnership.

Three of the original 6 options that kicked off the process were found to have so little support with the majority of the schools that it was suggested that they should not be taken any further in the discussion process; these were:

- Merge the Berwick and Tweedmouth Middle Schools with Berwick Academy to form a 9-18 academy
- Replace the High School building only
- Set up a Local Authority MAT to include all schools in the partnership

#### 18. Berwick Community Survey September – October 2021

As agreed with the partnership, a survey targeted more widely at staff, governors, parents, pupils and anyone within the wider community with an interest was developed and launched in September 2021 via the Council's Citizen Space platform and 436 responses were received from consultees who identified against the following groups:

- Parents of children in a Berwick School – 226
- Staff member of a Berwick school - 107
- Resident/member of the community – 43
- Other - 30
- Governor in Berwick School – 26
- Parish Councillor in Berwick area - 4

It should be noted that the Berwick Community Survey took place prior to the Ofsted inspection of Berwick Academy of November 2021, where the school was judged to have moved to 'Requires Improvement, from the previous 'Inadequate'

judgement. The majority of the survey questions were set at a very general level requiring a simple Yes/No response (listed below) to introduce some of the issues facing the partnership. Table 6 sets out the questions and general responses.

**Table 6**

Question	Yes	No
Do you agree that outcomes could be improved across all schools in the Berwick Partnership?	89%	11%
Do you agree that the provision for all children with SEND who live in the area needs to be extended to ensure children and young people's needs are met locally?	94%	6%
Do you agree that solutions for ensuring viability of schools for the future needs to address how surplus places could be reduced?	83%	17%
Do you agree that any change to the school system ensures medium to long-term viability within a clear school pathway from beginning to end, and is supported and valued by the wider Berwick community for years to come?	83%	17%
Do you agree that it would be best value for public funding to be invested in a school system that is viable for the future and improved educational outcomes overall?	95%	5%

The survey also asked two questions that required a specific response:

- What changes, if any, do you think could be made to schools in the Berwick Partnership that could improve outcomes?

The main responses to this question were:

- Implement a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system; 3-tier doesn't match National Curriculum
  - Improve discipline and behaviour
  - Recruit and retain good teachers
  - Investment in school buildings
  - Put Berwick Academy back into LA control
  - Support the 3-tier system, issue is with KS4
  - Better and more facilities for children with SEND
  - Support outcomes at KS4 to improve
  - Share good practice; increase collaboration between schools
- What would be your priority for investment in education?

The main responses to this question were:

- Invest in buildings and facilities
- Invest in SEND facilities/new SEND school
- Set up 2-tier system
- Improve facilities in 3-tier system
- Invest in good staff for excellent teaching and learning
- Invest in education resources
- A new building for the academy

Lastly, the survey asked respondents to review the statements in Table 7 and to rank them in order of their priority – the statements are presented in order of overall ranking, with 1 being the most popular.

**Table 7**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Improved outcomes for all children whatever their abilities	1
A system that attracts and retains the best teachers	2
School buildings that are appropriate for teaching and learning in the 21st Century	3
Improved and extended provision to meet the needs of children with SEND in the area covered by Berwick Partnership schools	4
Schools that have excellent facilities that are shared with the local community	5
All schools large enough to withstand fluctuations in pupil numbers	6

The full results and comments received in the survey are provided at Appendix 1 as a link.

19. Workshops to refine remaining options September-October 2021

As previously state, 4 potential options were taken forward for more in depth discussion and refinement at workshops held in Berwick and attended by NCC officers, headteachers, CE diocesan representative, and RSC and DfE representatives in September and October 2021, running in parallel with the Berwick Community Survey. The reasons why these discussions were taking place were also being refined to become the ‘Vision for Change’ for Berwick Partnership.

At the plenary meeting with the headteachers and Chairs of Governors in December 2021, the proposed Vision for Change and summaries of the further work on the relevant four options were shared, which were;

- **Vision for Change for Berwick (after refinement):**



- **Improving Education Outcomes** at each phase to ensure every child meets their potential.
  - **Sustainability of Education** across the whole of the Berwick Partnership for the long term.
  - **Improving and extending SEND offer** for children and young people in Berwick Partnership so that their needs are met locally and travel times are reduced significantly.
  - **Engaging the Berwick Community** in the review process to build an understanding of all the issues and to grow support for any proposed changes within schools in order that the community engages, supports and thrives.
  - Ensure **schools work together** to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable model for the future.
  - Underpinning the **best value for NCC capital investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities which may arise.
- **Workshop 1 - Summary of views on Mixed Economy (3-tier/2-tier) model**

Overall, no support to progress this option for the following reasons:

- No clear pathway for parents, likely to create more pupil movement with children changing phases at different times.
  - Choice, but also risks financial viability of schools.
  - Heads identified a lot more weakness and threats
    - Confusing
    - Doesn't address falling rolls
    - Lack of curriculum continuity
    - Pupil mobility
    - Transition issues
    - Slow death of some schools
    - Lack of ability to future plan
- **Workshop 2 – Summary of views on the Campus Option (as presented)**

Overall, headteachers found this model did not address the issues facing the partnership across all schools and phases, although it had some merits.

#### Positives

- Improved transition and curriculum planning.
- Opportunity to create a legacy and community hub, enhanced post 16/18 offer.
- Questions raised regarding it being a two or three tier campus e.g. could be either?
- The model has been superseded by Three Bridges [as was] and Berwick Academy looking into becoming MAT.

#### Concerns

- Model doesn't address wider partnership issues with falling rolls.
- Would create an educationally and financially viable campus through economies of scale, but not for all phases.



However, it should be noted that a campus model is primarily a building solution and could work within a 3-tier or 2-tier structure. With an alternative group of schools, this solution could still emerge as an option from wider consultation.

- **Workshop 3 – Summary of views on the 2-tier (primary/secondary) Option**

Overall, there was enough support for this option among headteachers for it be considered as a relevant option for consultation with the wider public.

Positives

- May stop drift south and over border of pupils.
- National data suggests better outcomes under two tier system.
- Children choosing GCSE options with teachers who know them well and have trusted relationships.
- A better system for mainstream SEN and vulnerable pupils.
- Fits national curriculum and fewer transitions.
- School accountable for key stage.

Concerns

- Change of system won't change falling rolls.
- Fear of change.
- Transition from small rural school to secondary school could be daunting for some pupils/parents.
- Capacity of small schools to manage the change.
- Potential MAT between high and middle not known.
- Anxiety over job losses at all levels.

- **Workshop 4 – Summary of views on merging Berwick and Tweedmouth Middles and extending the age range to become 9-16 (version of 3-tier)**

Headteachers decided that this proposal was too divisive and would be unsuitable as a solution to resolve the issues facing the partnership for the following reasons:

- Creates competition (head-to-head battle for students) and could lead to potential closure of one or more schools as not sufficient pupils to make having two high schools financially viable.
- Nothing to add to the current offer and doesn't resolve current issues.
- Does not address the agreed vision.
- No support for first schools.
- Concern around community support for very large school.

20. Views of full Governing Bodies

At the meeting of 13 December 2021, the proposed Vision and summaries of the options refined in the workshops were presented to headteachers and Chairs of Governors. Schools were asked to share the vision and summaries of the options with their full Governing Bodies to ascertain whether the latter shared these views, and responses were requested by 21 January.

All but one of the Governing Bodies supported the Vision, although requests for some minor amendments were made to clarify meaning and intent.

Feedback from Governing Bodies in relation to their assessment of headteachers' conclusions on the options reached at the workshops were as follows:

**Option 1: Mixed Economy** – All Governing Bodies (except 1 nil return) resoundingly rejected this as viable option to resolve the issues facing the partnership.

**Option 2: Campus model** - The majority of Governing Bodies were against this option for a variety of reasons including its limited impact on only those schools involved in the campus proposal. A minority saw some merit or were ambivalent as it would not affect them.

**Option 3: 2-Tier** – This option split the views of the Governing Bodies, with 9 schools in support, 4 against and 3 unsure or undecided.

**Option 4: Merge Berwick and Tweedmouth Middles and extend age range to 16** – All Governing Bodies supported the headteachers assessment of this model and were against it for a number of reasons, including setting schools up in direct competition, lack of fit with the Vision for Berwick, and does not address the underlying issues facing the partnership.

In addition, there was a specific request from the Belford Governing Body to become part of the Alnwick Partnership as it is already organised as a primary school, while the Governing Body of Wooler and Glendale raised their continuing concerns of being located in Berwick Partnership but impacted by the 2-tier structure in Alnwick. The need to address additional provision for students with SEND also featured in the comments.

## 21. Recommended Next Steps

In summary, the work carried out with the Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Berwick Partnership, and the results of the Berwick Community Survey, it appears that there are just two favoured options for organisational structure. These are the continuation of the current 3-tier system, albeit with some changes to address falling pupil numbers, educational standards and investment in buildings and whole partnership reorganisation to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system to include relevant proposals to address the same issues.

Another issue that has arisen through this work is the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership and in what circumstances (e.g. under reorganisation to 2-tier) or whether it would be more appropriate for the schools to become part of the Alnwick Partnership to match the flow of pupils at the secondary phase.

Therefore, Cabinet is recommended to approve a period of pre-consultation with schools, staff, parents and the wider community to establish whether specific proposals for individual schools should be brought forward within a 3-tier structure or a 2-tier structure and linked to this provision for SEND, Early Years and Post-16 and Post-18 in the partnership. Cabinet is also recommended to approve the inclusion of a question to ascertain views on the future of Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools in relation to their inclusion in Berwick or Alnwick Partnership.

## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	The proposed planned first stage of informal consultation is consistent with the Council's Corporate aim 'Living, Learning - We will ensure the best education standards for our children and young people.'
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The wider principles of financial and educational viability and sustainability of schools in the Berwick Partnership will be considered as part of the first stage of consultation.
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The manner and format of informal consultation on school structures is not prescribed, although DfE guidelines recommend a minimum period of 6 weeks of consultation and the Council has a tried and tested robust process for carrying out such consultation. Consultation should be in line with the guiding principles set out in <a href="#"><i>R v London Borough of Brent, ex p Gunning [1985] LGR 168</i></a>, frequently referred to as "the <i>Gunning</i> principles":</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>consultation</b> must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.</li> <li>• The proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response. Those consulted should be aware of the criteria that will be applied when considering proposals and which factors will be considered decisive or of substantial importance at the end of the problem</li> <li>• Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.</li> <li>• The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any statutory proposals.</li> </ul>
<b>Procurement</b>	No implications
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There would be no direct HR implications as a result of carrying out stage 1 informal consultation. Should stage 2 informal consultation be approved at a later stage, some HR implications may arise.
<b>Property</b>	Not applicable at stage 1 of informal consultation.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) No	An Equalities Impact Assessment is not relevant to Stage 1 of informal consultation as it relates to general principles. Should there be approval for a stage 2 of informal consultation which would look at specific proposals for individual schools, an EIA would be completed to reflect the outcomes of such consultation.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full risk assessment would be carried out should Stage 2 of informal consultation be approved at a later date.

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	The proposal set out in this report is based upon a desire to improve outcomes for current and future children and young people and their families in the Berwick Partnership area.
<b>Carbon Reduction</b>	At this stage, it is not envisaged that the processes set out within this report will have any impact, positive or negative, on carbon reduction
<b>Consultation</b>	This report has been considered by the Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Children's Services and the Member for Children's Services
<b>Wards</b>	Berwick East, Berwick North, Berwick West with Ord, Norham and Islandshires, Wooler and Bamburgh.

### Background Papers

None applicable

### Report Sign Off

	<b>Full Name</b>
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Monitoring Officer/Legal clearance	Suki Binjal
Deputy Chief Executive	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Portfolio Holder	Guy Renner-Thompson

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Appendix 1 – Responses from Berwick Community Survey - [Link](#)



## Northumberland County Council

### FAMILY & CHILDREN OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022

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#### Family Hubs in Northumberland

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

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson

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#### Purpose of report

To provide an update on the work that Children's Social Care and a range of partners are currently undertaking to establish Family Hubs in Northumberland.

#### Recommendations

To agree the process of the Children Centres (CC) transition to Family Hubs (FH) with a new 'core offer', based on the Leadsom Report 'The Best Start for Life' April 2021, with its emphasis on the colocation of family health services with other Early Help professionals. ([The Best Start for Life](#))

#### Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Excellence and Quality priority, and the '**opportunity to improve customer experience**' and the Residents First priority, to '**respond to the needs of our community**' included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

#### Key issues

1. Children's social care through its Early Help service offer provides support to children and young people aged 0-19 and their families which can help to reduce the need for statutory services. Children's Centres relate to and are associated with the under 5's but have been delivering services to families with older children in Northumberland since 2017. The time is right for **a rebranding and launch of the centres as Family Hubs** to fully represent the work of the service and its many multi – agency partners.
2. Consistent messaging of early help and public health initiatives and interventions help families to understand and appreciate the importance of child development and wider safety messages. **Increased consistency of these messages** strengthens

families and supports the whole early help workforce and ethos in its delivery. Co-location, co delivery and regular reviews of agency referral will improve the joined-up support that families expect and deserve. The Family Hub model is not prescriptive, it is flexible to suit each context and to evolve as circumstances change over time.

3. Northumberland's Early Help service offer is based on a **relational culture** when families are seeking help. During the early years families build valued and trusted relationships with the people they meet in the Children's centres, they do not need to sever these relationships when a child turns 5. The Family Hub model with colocation and codelivery will give families seamless transitions from one level of help and support to another within a well-designed system.

## **Background**

The Sure Start programme began in 1998 which initially resulted in **26 centres and outreach bases across Northumberland**. Over the years various rationalisations of the programme and buildings have taken place to meet need and review services based on impact. Today **12 centres** and various outreach posts (Allendale, Bellingham, Rothbury and Wooler Fire Stations and Albemarle Barracks Mini Mess) and mobile play vans remain. In 2017 the centres became part of the Early Help Locality offer in Northumberland for families of children 0-19.

The main centres in each of the 4 Early Help Localities will be rebranded to form Family Hubs. These are:

- **Central Locality.** Ashington CC, Bedlington CC, Newbiggin CC
- **Southeast Locality.** Blyth Central CC, Blyth West CC
- **West Locality.** Prudhoe CC, Hexham CC, Haltwhistle CC, Bellingham CC
- **North Locality.** Berwick CC, Alnwick CC, Hadston CC

## **What is a Family Hub?**

“Family Hubs are centres which, as part of integrated family services ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19 receive early help to overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships. Effective early intervention can improve children’s wellbeing, educational attainment, and life chances, reduce family poverty, improve mental health and lead to lower crime, unemployment and other negative outcomes which carry significant cost to the public purse.

These centres enhance integrated working by enabling easier access to support, better outcomes for families, more effective service delivery and smarter use of budgets.”

## **Family Hub Aims**

- *To strengthen families* by providing help with the myriad challenges parents face; specially those which will hamper children’s social, emotional, and physical development and their educational progress.
- *To help prevent family breakdown* by:
  - Supporting families where parenting is particularly difficult and ensuring access to early help to address problems which might otherwise escalate.
  - Providing relationship support for couples at life’s key pressure points and when parents find it hard to resolve conflict.
- *To support separating families* to reduce parental conflict and achieve workable parenting arrangements in the best interests of the children thereby preventing, where possible, the need to access the family courts.

## **What is Distinctive about Family Hubs?**

Family Hubs provide a central access point for integrated services, whether this is a building named a Family Hub, a building with another title, or a virtual access point. It is

important that families know where to go and get help, and that staff and volunteers are trained to respond sensitively and effectively to families' enquiries. The Family Hub model enables every region to make the most of the buildings/delivery sites they have available. Most commonly, a Family Hub is co-located with other services and signposts families to services within the same building but is equally integrated with services provided at other delivery sites (described by some as 'spokes' of the hub).

The relationships between the Family Hub, families and other delivery sites are equally important to ensure a whole family approach and, as far as possible, a seamless, integrated service. An indication that a Family Hub is working well is when a family need tell their story only once and services and people then work together to give that family the support they need."

Ref: [Introducing Family Hubs - The Family Hubs Network](#)

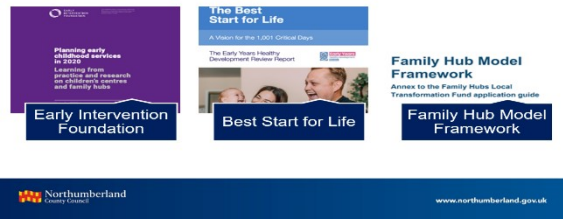
### **What have we done so far in NCC?**

With this emphasis on 'No Wrong Door' our intention is to rebrand our Children's Centres to become Family Hubs by September 2022. Children's Social Care managers in Early Help are part of a nationwide **FH Network** which provides support, guidance, and conferences to LAs and other partners considering the FH model. The DfE have commissioned the **Anna Freud Centre to act as the national centre for the development of Family Hubs**. The centre has provided a model framework for the development of FH and the Early Help service has benchmarked against this and the following is now in place:

- A multi-agency implementation plan is in place led by a group of strategic leaders from across a range of partners supporting families. Five stakeholder groups have been formed to drive this implementation forward. These consider Governance, Service delivery, Communication, Workforce and Evaluation.
- Northumberland has been successful in securing funds from a regional bid and is working in partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council on its FH development. Funding secured is currently being utilised to provide a communications post, site adaptations for co-delivery and colocation (midwifery clinical rooms) and IT equipment for digital and virtual delivery to families.
- Children's Social Care through the Early Help Service is working with the Harrogate District Foundation Trust in relation to the 0-19 provision (health visiting and school nursing). This has an emphasis on co-production and co delivery. Service delivery teams of Health Visitors, Midwives, and Primary Mental Health Practitioners are currently moving into the Children's Centre buildings, supported by Planning, Estates, and IT departments within NCC.



## Implications

<p><b>Policy</b></p>	<p>Why a shift towards Family Hubs?</p>  <p>Fits with national policy and steer</p>
<p><b>Finance and value for money</b></p>	<p>Development of coproduction with early help partners across the whole system, coproduction and shared delivery with health and collocation of teams in the buildings results in the best use of resources at no additional cost. CSC including commissioning and Estates are currently negotiating income and shared costs with health providers.</p> <p>CSC were successful in with a regional funding bid to assist with the development of Family Hubs. This is funding building adaptations and an increase in the IT infrastructure. Funding will be spent by the end of March</p>
<p><b>Legal</b></p>	<p>Development of SLAs and licences for the use of shared spaces are currently being discussed with Planning and Estates.</p>
<p><b>Procurement</b></p>	<p>Implications for future commissioning of services to fit with model are being considered.</p>
<p><b>Human Resources</b></p>	<p>Possible implications for future service development which may have changes for staffing structures/roles.</p>
<p><b>Property</b></p>	<p>Shared use of buildings, transport and outside areas.</p>
<p><b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>EIA currently being considered as building adaptations take place. The wider determinants of the EIA will focus on the benefits for identified groups, particularly in terms of better access.</p>
<p><b>Risk Assessment</b></p>	<p>N/A at this stage.</p>
<p><b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b></p>	<p>The Family Hub model will support the wider prevention agenda.</p>
<p><b>Customer Consideration</b></p>	<p>The Family Hub model will deliver a clearer point of access for the whole family. No wrong door.</p>

<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Sharing buildings with others should support reduced carbon footprint?
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Working with a range of health services and joining up delivery at the point of access should provide an easier seamless service for families.
<b>Wards</b>	All

### **Background Papers**

See links embedded in the paper

### **Report Sign Off**

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter obo Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Cath McEvoy-Carr obo Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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## Northumberland County Council

### FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022

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#### **Annual Report of the Children's Principal Social Worker**

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

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

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**1. Purpose of report**

To advise and update the Scrutiny Committee about the input and work of the Principal Social Worker in 2021 and an overview of the quality of practice and development needs of frontline social workers.

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- 1) The Committee acknowledges the contents of the report and the work that has been completed over the last year.
- 2) Members agree the priorities and identify any further areas for scrutiny or challenge if required.

**3. Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the 'Being Safe and Feeling Valued' priority included with the NCC Children and Young People's Plan 2019-22 and NCC Children's Service Statement 2019/21.

**4. Key issues**

- Impact of the pandemic on practice and service delivery
- Recruitment and retention of children's social workers
- Manageable caseloads
- Practice improvement

## 5. BACKGROUND

5.1 The role of the Principal Social Worker is to take a professional social work lead across the organisation to influence strategic decision making, respond to national initiatives and take part in developing a body of knowledge that supports front line practice.

5.2 Part of this function is to provide feedback to key groups including elected members. A report was provided by the Principal Social Worker to FACS (Family and Children's Services) Scrutiny meeting in January 2021. This included information about activity relating to recruitment, staff training and development, caseloads and practice improvement. This report will elaborate on those themes and outline the plan for 2022/23.

### 5.3 Workforce

#### 5.3.1 Facts/figures

Northumberland Local Authority Social Work Workforce statistical information data is provided to the Department of Education on an annual basis. The reporting year runs from October to September. The graph below at 5.3.1a provides information submitted Nov 2021.

#### 5.3.1a

Indicator	NCC Oct 20 to Sept 21	NCC Oct 19 to Sept 20	National figure (19-20)	Regional figure (19-20)
a) Turnover Rate	16.0%	14.7%	14%	12.0%
b) Agency Worker Rate	10.0%	9.4%	15.4%	11.0%
c) Vacancy Rate	12.0%	9.7%	16.0%	8.0%
d) Days lost to sickness absence	2000	1903		
e) Absence Rate	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
f) Caseload average at 30-09-20	15.1	15	16	18

5.3.2 The turnover rate (16%) remains higher than the national average of 14% and the regional average of 12%. This is also an increase on the previous year's figure of 14.7%. However, while vacancy rates have increased there are positive reasons such as retirement or moving closer to family. We have also used vacancies to increase the ASYE Cohort.

5.3.3a **Reason for leaving**

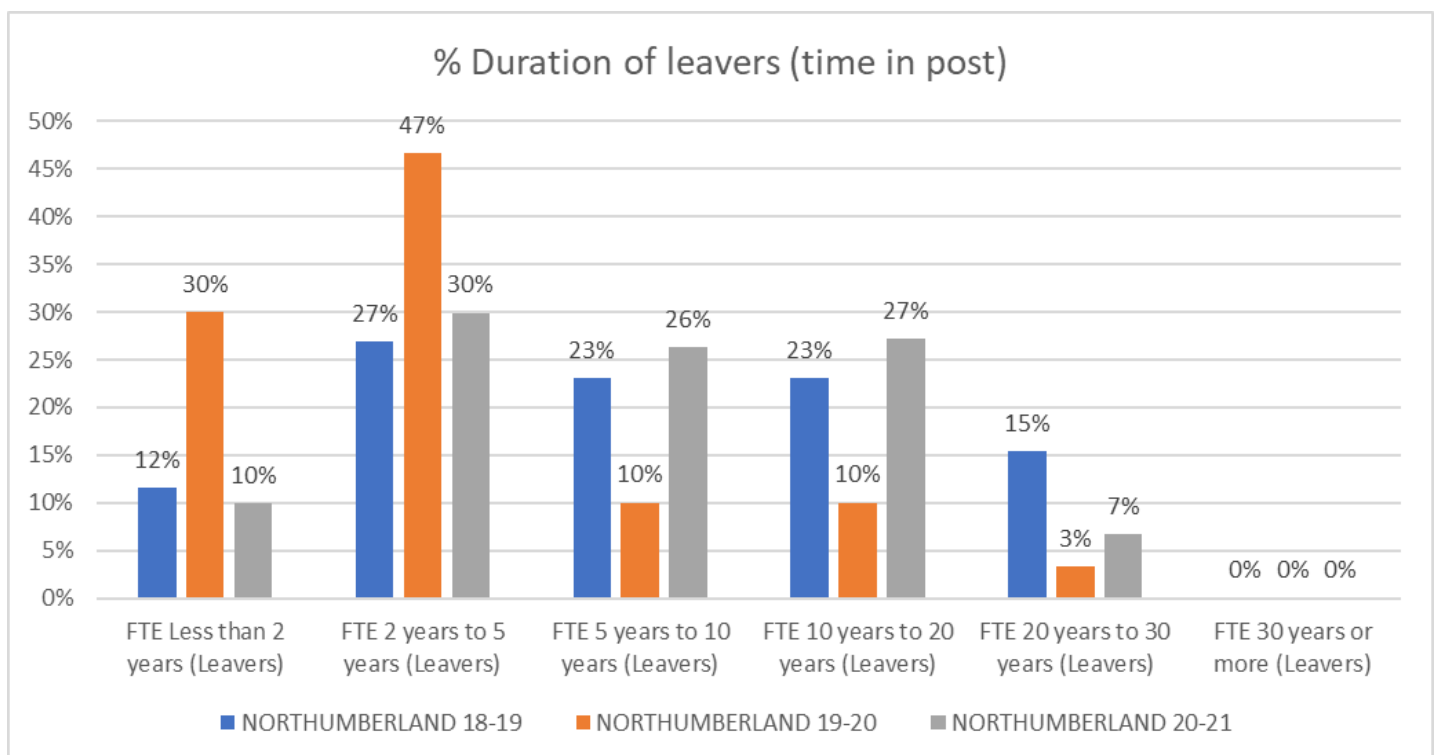
Resignation	29
Voluntary Redundancy	1
Retired	3
Deceased	1

5.3.3 **Destination of leaver**

Social worker role in different LA in England, for example leavers who moved to a role as a child and family social worker in another LA in England	10
Social worker role outside England, for example leavers who moved to a role as a child and family social worker outside England	1
Agency or consultancy social work (in England), for example leavers who moved to a role as a children's agency worker or consultant in England	4
Other social work role non LA (in England) for example leavers who moved to a non-LA social work role other than agency or consultancy work, for example, employment as a social worker in a charity	7
Non-social care role / no employment / career break / any other role outside England / left England	8
Other	1
Not known	3

5.3.4 Social workers who left to work in other Local Authorities were based in the Safeguarding Locality Teams. These teams manage very complex, child and family cases. In line with thresholds, a number of these children have or may have suffered significant harm. The emotional impact on staff who work in this particular sector can be high. Unfortunately transferring to other Local Authorities to fulfil the same role can be a sign of staff starting to feel 'burnout'. However the graph above at 5.3.3 also evidences 7 leavers remain in non-statutory social work therefore not leaving the profession in its altogether.

5.3.5 There are also a number that have left children's social work in its entirety. As per the graph below at 5.3.6.



5.3.6 Department for Education's Children's National Workforce Data Report (30th September 2021)

5.3.7 Nationally there has been a 3.7% increase of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) child and family social workers in post at 30 September 2020. However, as per the graph below (5.3.6a) during the year ending September 2021, 40% of FTE child and family social worker leavers had been in service in their Local Authority for less than 5 years. This percentage is lower than the 2020 figure of 77%.

5.3.8 Northumberland's vacancy rates have grown over the past year. Whilst lower than the national average the percentage is markedly higher than the regional average, although as noted above, we have used vacancies to increase the ASYE cohort.

To further understand this, we continue to offer exit meetings between the leaver and their line manager prior to departure and an exit questionnaire via HR.

5.3.9 However, to enhance understanding of the reasons for departure I now offer an additional exit meeting between myself and the staff member. These meetings are attended on a 1:1 voluntary basis and have been held virtually due to COVID restrictions. Since September 2021, 10 members of staff have been offered a meeting. Of these 10 staff 3 made the decision to stay with Northumberland following the meeting.

5.3.10 The roles 7 staff members held in Northumberland prior to leaving

- 2 x Advanced Practitioner
- 1 x Social Worker
- 2 x Newly Qualified Social Worker (both no longer fulfil the role of Social Worker)
- 2 x Team Manager

5.3.11 Themes identified in the exit interviews include:

- Moved due to career progression opportunity
- Disgruntled staff due to not securing a promotion
- Minimal career progression opportunities above Team Manage level
- Travel time/costs from home

5.3.12 It is envisaged continual monitoring and evaluating data *and* speaking directly to leavers/prospective leavers will assist us in taking corrective actions moving forward.

5.3.13 A number of experienced workers choose to work for social work agencies and historically due to local demand they have been in a strong position to command high rates of pay. In a bid to take control of the market the regional workforce leads have continued to work collaboratively to ensure the cap of charges payable to agency staff is adhered to through the regional memorandum of understanding (MoU).

5.3.14 This has also provided consistency of key worker for children and families. Another benefit has been consistency of team building, peer support and stability, which is vital in this service area due to the emotive issues which safeguarding children can bring. This is particularly relevant in the current climate due to the pandemic.

Please find further information regarding staff wellbeing within the wellbeing section below.

- 5.3.15 The workforce return table at 5.3.1a illustrates that Northumberland’s use of agency staff has increased since last year. However, remains lower than the region and markedly lower than the national average.
- 5.3.16 COVID and the impact on staffing has also dictated the use of agency staff where some staff have had to isolate/or work from home, concerns of hidden harm remained at the forefront of service delivery therefore it was imperative to ensure the frontline workforce were available to fulfil the role.
- 5.3.17 Agency staff are only utilised when all other avenues have been exhausted. We are utilising the role of social work support assistants and back-office support staff creatively This includes effectively utilising staff joining the Children’s Academy to add additional capacity before they commence in their social work roles.
- 5.3.18 Sickness absence is a key priority for the Council and Children’s Services. Every effort was and is made to remain in regular close contact by line management and peers alike to support each other during this time. Some staff have had to isolate due to Covid, or to stay at home due to their child/ren having Covid. It is testament to our staff that they have continued to work from home to fulfil their role in safeguarding our children and supporting families. Of note, Children’s Services sickness absence is currently lower than other areas of the Council.
- 5.3.19 As a leadership team we have continually focused on staff wellbeing throughout the pandemic ensuring we are trying to offer support to staff in a range of ways through virtual means as well. We continue to address and monitor sickness absence.
- 5.3.20 The graph below at 5.3.20a provides the reasons recorded for sickness leave (period Oct 2020 to Sept 2021). A significant percentage is due to emotional health. On average 1 member of staff was off sick for 8.72 days.

5.3.20a

<b>Absence Reason</b>	<b>FTE Lost days</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Other	896.19	54
Stress, Depression, Mental Health & Fatigue Syndromes	662.32	18
Stomach, Liver, Kidney & Digestion	173.41	16
Back & Neck Problems	120.60	7
Other Musculo-Skeletal Problems	70.38	5
Infections	52.05	18



Genitourinary/Gynaecological problems	51.95	4
Neurological	46.34	9
Cancer	27.57	1
Pregnancy Related	18.00	4
Chest & Respiratory	9.00	1
Heart, Blood Pressure & Circulation	1.22	1
Eye, Ear, Nose & Mouth/Dental	1.00	1

5.3.21 Stress/depression etc is the highest denominator of sickness. The impact of Covid coupled with national headlines around the very sad outcomes for children such as Arthur and Star has impacted social work/care morale. To address this, specific PSW drop-in sessions have been held to support staff and provide a safe environment for them to discuss and reflect on the above. These sessions were well attended. Our Director of Service - Graham Reiter also partook. We listened and more importantly 'heard' staff and offered reassurance balanced with expectations. Much of the feedback was positive about the support offered and in addition, staff are signposted and encouraged to utilise the corporate wellbeing services.

5.3.22 The caseload average figures indicate a slight increase from last year, however, well below national and regional averages. Complexity of cases has not reduced. To the contrary, this reflects the significant work that is being undertaken to manage demand at the front door and apply appropriate thresholds and the effectiveness of the early help offer which also supports the step-down of cases without delay once social work interventions have been completed. Covid has continued to bring about challenges to service delivery in terms of the pressures this ongoing phenomenon has placed upon families and practice.

5.3.23 A caseload weighting system is utilised to reflect the complexity of work in a more meaningful way than purely reporting on case numbers. This tool takes account of number of children, distance to travel (Northumberland does have challenges due to the geographic vastness of area) complexity of the case issues and administrative work required to provide a more helpful comparator.

5.3.24 The workload weighting system shows 77% of Practitioners were working at or below capacity in February 2022. This has improved from 75% as at the same period in 2021 however the aim is for this to be 100%.

5.3.25 As a service, all attempts are made to address caseloads however the recurring issue of retention within children's social care, both locally and nationally can impact this as work does need to be allocated with children being the priority. We continue to contribute to regional work on this.

- 5.3.26 However, we are pleased efforts are reflected in the graph above (5.3.1a) citing our caseloads are lower than the regional and national average.
- 5.3.27 A national Health Check survey completed by members of our staff recently (further information available within the wellbeing section at 5.7 below cites 'staff recognise effective workforce planning systems' as the highest standard overall.
- 5.3.28 The staff with additional workloads are concentrated in the 14 + Team, the South East and Central Safeguarding Teams. These teams are prioritised for placing newly recruited experienced staff into them *and* the non-social work to relieve pressure. The staff structure will be reviewed regularly alongside the recruitment strategy to determine what changes are needed in line with requirements.

## **5.4 Recruitment**

- 5.4.1 During 2021 recruitment and development of Newly Qualified Social Workers has been successful. 23 new starters joined us in 2021. However, another round of recruitment held in December 2021 (with a start date of March 2022) saw a very low number of applications. For some of those that did apply, their interviews did not meet the reassuring standard required to support the children and families of Northumberland. This is very disappointing as the cohort interviewed were predominantly MA students.
- 5.4.2 Another round of recruitment has commenced for the September 2022 Cohort. It is envisaged these numbers and quality of candidate will be markedly higher due to a larger pool to select from.
- 5.4.3 Our first Cohort of BA Social Work Apprentices (in their final year) will join the Academy in September 2022 (pending successful completion of the Programme). This Cohort commenced the 3-year programme in 2019.
- 5.4.4 We have subsequently doubled capacity to 4 per annum. Therefore, in line with succession planning, we currently have 10 BA Apprenticeship students (sourced internally) in the pipeline/system. We endeavour to utilise this route to provide a steady stream of social workers moving forward as it also provides opportunity to staff who have been loyal to Northumberland County Council as an employer of choice.
- 5.4.5 As discussed, routes into the Academy include successful completion of a BA or MA degree via local universities. We are also part of the DfE Step Up to Social Work initiative which occurs every 2 years. We currently have 3 Step Up students who commenced the 14 months Programme in January 2022. This too supports capacity within teams as the students fulfil a number of duties including supervised contact and direct work with children and families.

- 5.4.6 Recruitment of experienced staff remains a challenge which impacts differentially in some services. We use a number of means including targeted social media to attract experienced social workers. We also include staff 'talking heads' within our advertisements for prospective applicants to hear from individuals with actual work experience in Northumberland.
- 5.4.7 We remain part of the regional North East Social Work Alliance (NESWA) which includes all 12 LA's and local universities. We recognise the importance of relationship building with peers/colleagues to support and implement our strategies.
- 5.4.8 We are always looking for ways to further strengthen recruitment and retention. We are keen for Northumberland Children's to remain an Employer of choice. With that said we have proactively reached out to local Universities and have commenced attendance during their recall days to discuss the benefits of working in Northumberland by attending with alumni who work for us. We have also used these sessions to dispel the myth of 'extra travel' with the area being geographically large.
- 5.4.9 Recruitment of experienced staff is both a national and regional issue with all Local Authorities in the North-East experiencing similar difficulties. Ongoing attempts have been made to address the issues however the pandemic and media headlines has impacted this somewhat.
- 5.4.10 It seems the pressures of Covid and the associated risks around frontline social work impacted interest in joining Children's Social Work. From anecdotal conversations with our local university representatives, the appropriate promotion nationally and high regard of health staff and their invaluable role during the pandemic has supported uptake and interest for nursing, which is markedly higher than that of social work. It is disappointing (both nationally and via media) that the same promotion and acknowledgement of social work staff and all that has been done to support the most vulnerable in society, has not been as recognised.

## **5.5 Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)**

- 5.5.1 Since the previous Annual Report, Northumberland Children's ASYE Academy has supported new starters into post. This Academy model continues to support the transition from academic study by offering high support *and* constructive challenge to ensure social workers keep children at the heart of everything they do during and after transition to experienced social worker.
- 5.5.2 Newly qualified staff in the Academy are offered a comprehensive support package which includes:

- A thorough induction (Corporate and social work specific) for each Cohort. We have developed a Social Care Induction SharePoint to assist with this. <https://northumberland365.sharepoint.com/sites/ChildrensSocialCareInduction>
- Consistent experienced Management provides a high level of accessibility to ensure effective, approachable line management. In March 2021 we had 3 x Academy Team Managers and a Senior Practitioner, dedicated to supporting the Academy through their ASYE Programme. (This has subsequently been scaled back due to reflect reduced numbers. Every effort is made to make effective use of Management generally, reflected by wider service need. We will review this dependant on the numbers following recruitment for Cohort 8 of the Academy - September 2022 start).

5.5.3 Regardless of the challenges faced due to Covid, every effort has been made to continue the offer of a thorough, structured training programme and graduated caseload to ensure these Cohorts are fully supported to develop their skills.

5.5.4 Whilst COVID has greatly impacted staff regularly working/attending their office bases, every effort (Covid safe by socially distancing and wearing masks as applicable) has been made to provide an opportunity for the newly qualified Cohorts to commence their careers as a 'Cohort'. The invaluable peer learning and open office conversations with managers is a key aspect of effective social work action learning during their first 6 months in children's social work.

- The workers have and will continue to transition to Safeguarding Teams for the following 6 months of the ASYE programme. This will include a mix of working virtually and attending the office during Duty days and Team Days. Again, every effort has and will be made to ensure staff are working 'COVID safe in line with Corporate requirements.
- Support continues from the Academy Team Managers and the Senior Practitioner until completion of the Portfolio. This includes Practice Assessor responsibility and regular reflective supervision. I have also fulfilled the role of Practice Assessor in order to fully support and monitor the high level of practice expected of the social workers.

5.5.5 The benefits of the Academy Model adopted since 2018 have been realised as the ASYE's who have commenced their career via this route describe a positive experience. (A significant number of the Academy alumni have now applied for the Advanced Practitioner posts in line with effective succession planning).

5.5.6 Timing of recruitment continues to be aligned with university/course completion in order to ensure Northumberland attracts 'the best candidates'. As discussed,

candidates who provide particularly strong application forms, evidencing their transferable skill set and desire to support children and families, are interviewed prior to full completion of their degree and offered a post as a social work support assistant within Locality Safeguarding Teams.

5.5.7 It is also an opportunity for new appointees to network and build relationships whilst offering support to 'pressure point' teams.

5.5.8 Due to the success of the Academy, other regional LA's and our Northumberland Adults Service have sought our advice in terms of implementing this Model in their respective areas.

## 5.6 Staff Retention

5.6.1 To ensure continual recognition and encouragement of staff, we held graduation ceremonies for staff who completed their ASYE. Practice Assessors were also invited and acknowledged for their part in developing the ASYE's. These events were well received with attendee staff saying they feel recognised and valued. Unfortunately, the continuation of the pandemic has meant we are unable to hold the significant event in person. However, every opportunity to encourage and support staff to grow, is utilised to build morale and resilience, especially during these testing times. We have plans for World Social Work Day (held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues of March) where staff will be invited to attend a coffee morning/afternoon *and or* a lunch time session to build morale and remind staff why they joined social work. This year's theme includes 'leaving no one behind'.



5.6.2 As discussed, due to careful development and recognition of their skillset, our Academy Alumni have successfully transitioned into experienced Social Workers. We have 7 Academy Alumni applying for Advanced Practitioner roles across the service. This is testament to the Programme as the Alumni are proactively role modelling future opportunities for their peers.

5.6.3 However, we fully recognise it is imperative to support staff to 'walk' before they 'run' in order to ensure we continually support children and families here in Northumberland. We have focused heavily on our 'learning culture for staff' which I will discuss further on.

5.6.4 We are extremely conscious of the regional and national issue around a shortage of experienced children's social workers. Therefore, it is envisaged Northumberland's 'Grow our Own' model of effective, confident, competent

practitioners will continue to be a route to assist in addressing the local shortage of experienced social workers.

- 5.6.5 We have continued to develop this route by proactively upscaling the BA Social Work Apprenticeship numbers.
- 5.6.6 We intentionally selected internal applicants to recognise and support staff who have shown a loyalty and commitment to working for Northumberland Council. This is in line with Northumberland's Corporate Plan mandate - *'regardless of age, have the right qualifications and skills to secure a good job that pays well and provides the prospect of a rewarding career'*.
- 5.6.7 September 2021 saw another 4 Apprentices join the Programme from internal routes. A Mentor role is required as part of the Programme. We continually encourage Managers and their Social Workers to fulfil this role as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It is important to always consider and implement CPD opportunities for social workers to continually develop their practice within a number of forums.
- 5.6.8 We also recognise from exit meetings/information staff move to other areas for promotion/s development. Therefore, we endeavour to offer this in house in the first instance and retain staff in the best interests of consistency and relationship building.
- 5.6.9 We have 2 Advanced Practitioners partaking in the regional Leadership and Management - Social Worker to First Line Managers Programme.
- 5.6.10 We currently have 4 Team Managers partaking in the Practice Supervisor Development Programme . This DfE funded Programme is a CPD offer for staff who are responsible for supporting and developing the practice of others.
- 5.6.11 Experienced social workers have also supported students partaking in the Think Ahead Programme. They have fulfilled the role of Practice Supervisors. This again provides opportunity for staff to hone/share skills by partake in our adhering to our ongoing 'Learning Culture' as an organisation.
- 5.6.12 We have strong positive working relationships with Higher Education Establishments through the Teaching Partnership, supporting students to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge in preparation for being part of our future social work force. We offer high quality placements and this in turn provides an opportunity to further develop current staff by supporting social workers to become Practice Educators.

- 5.6.13 In turn it is also beneficial to have a pool of 'seasoned' practitioners once they have completed their studies. This is evident in the high number of students who have successfully transitioned (via a thorough recruitment process) into a permanent social work post.
- 5.6.14 As Signs of Safety is our chosen practice model, the Senior Management role model expectations of service delivery by partaking in sessions with our frontline staff. We are keen to display learning happens at all levels and is continual.
- 5.6.15 As a predominant WB demographic, both resident and staffing we are mindful of ensuring our staff consider all elements of inclusivity, including race. My Managers have supported my Chairing of the Race Equality Network for Northumberland Council. I ensure learning and information is shared regularly with our own staff within Children's Social Care to raise awareness and build confidence in delivering an effective, informed service to all. This information is shared via a quarterly PSW Briefing and during meetings with staff.

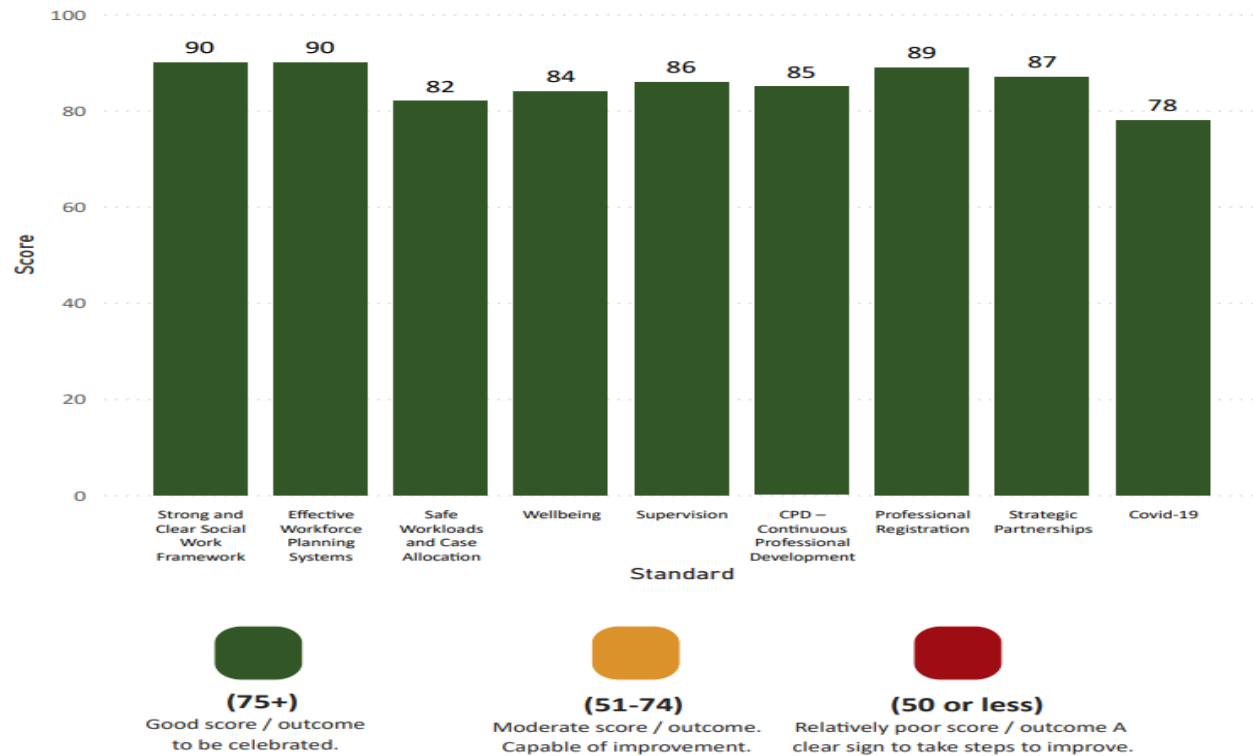
## **5.7 Wellbeing**

Considering all of the above and the concern Children's Social Care staff carried around 'hidden harm' due to reduced access to the child's lived world/experience and vulnerable primary carers (domestic violence) we have made every effort to support social workers as professionals by supporting wellbeing. This is in line with our Corporate Plan 2018-21 Involving staff in '*Creating a healthy and positive working environment*'. Pg. 4 CP 2018/21.

- 5.7.1 Northumberland Children's Social Workers have recently completed a PSW Health and Wellbeing Survey via the Local Government Association. This has provided insight and will assist in sharpening the focus on celebrating strengths whilst addressing challenges.
- 5.7.2 The graph at 5.7.2a provides an overview of standard scores. However, I will refer to specific segments within the wellbeing section further below. It is reassuring to read there is recognition of the efforts made by the Leadership to ensure our Social Workers can meet the needs of the role by being valued as an invaluable resource, in turn meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

## 5.7.2a

Figure 1: Standard Scores



5.7.3 Information at 5.7.3a displays our social workers views specifically around wellbeing

### 5.7.3a

Wellbeing	
Questions	Score
I feel safe in my role and the work I am expected to do.	82
I have access to private, quality space in order to meet my supervisor and people I work with.	88
My employer has in place caring and effective systems for reporting and responding to concerns I raise, and will act to ensure I am able to work safely.	85
My organisation facilitates my access to my Professional Association, Trade Union and other supportive organisations	80
My organisation is actively committed to anti-racism and a positive, inclusive culture of opportunity for members of staff of all backgrounds and protected characteristics	89
My organisation recognises the emotional demands of social work and provides me with supervision, support and tools I need to deal with this	80
My organisation takes appropriate action to prevent and deal with risks of violence, bullying and harassment in any aspect of my work	85
I am encouraged and empowered by my organisation to make time for my own self-care and wellbeing activities	78
I feel cared for by my managers and/or supervisor	89
I have time and space for supportive peer to peer and team discussion	81

5.7.4 As discussed, retention of experienced staff is critical to maintain low turnover rates. Regardless of Covid, Children’s Safeguarding teams commonly experience staff moving on after a short period of time as they feel burned out or stressed by the type of work and its associated demands.



5.7.5 The LGA PSW Health Check survey also looked at the impact on practice in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19	
Questions	Score
Changes during the pandemic have enabled me to work in a more strength based way with my clients	62
I have been able to continue to access relevant learning opportunities and training through my organisation	88
I have been able to maintain enough, high quality, safe contact with people I work with to ensure their welfare and to meet my statutory and/or organisational responsibilities	82
I have been supported by my organisation to continue to work safely and effectively within a clear social work practice framework	89
I have had access to the practice guidance and technology I have needed to work online/ remotely with people using services and colleagues	91
My organisation has ensured all staff are appropriately protected from the risk of infection by the virus and taken account of different individual risks of infection on grounds of (e.g.) age, ethnicity, prior health conditions, caring for others etc	91
I have continued to have satisfactory one to one supervision	94
I have experienced an increase in severity of need in people being referred to me and/or my team*	75
I have felt positive and able to cope with work most of the time	72
My supervisor has helped me manage my overall wellbeing and work life balance	82

5.7.6 Covid has had an impact on our staff. Overall, our Social Workers have been tenacious and resourceful in their approach during these unprecedented times. A 'can do' attitude remains, regardless of the concerns around themselves as professionals and all that this entails, as well as factors which impact on their personal lives. All of this test's resilience which is borne from a balance between the personal and professional.

5.7.7 We understand effective supervision is a priority. It is important for staff to have the opportunity to focus on both case management and reflection.

Supervision	
Questions	Score
I can raise concerns about the quality and suitability of my supervision with an appropriate person in the organisation if I need to	78
I have uninterrupted, scheduled supervision at a suitable frequency with an appropriately skilled social work supervisor	90
I identify my learning needs and access professional development opportunities and training through supervision	91
My supervisor coaches me in the development of my professional judgement, creativity and autonomous decision making	88
Supervision helps me critically reflect on my work including working relationships, emotions and use of evidence	85
Supervision helps me reflect on how I meet professional regulatory standards	85

5.7.8 In order to continually listen and in turn understand social workers experiences nationally as well as locally, staff partaking in completion of the Health Check provides an important barometer for the Department for Education to understand

national workflow and barriers to effective practice and in turn important for us to build upon worker strengths and take corrective actions as required.

- 5.7.9 Staff wellbeing across the whole of Northumberland Council remains a priority area. This is specifically important due to the pandemic and the offer has been adapted accordingly, providing virtual forums.
- 5.7.10 Targeted support has been offered to social workers/managers via 2-hour virtual sessions with a focus on:
- Stress management, emotion management techniques, work life balance activity, self-care and self-esteem activities.
- 5.7.13 There are numerous corporate wide opportunities accessible to social care staff and staff are encouraged to partake. These include amongst others; Online fitness classes Apps. Staff mental wellbeing Network. Choir. A monthly calm space which provides tips for mental wellbeing.
- 5.7.14 There is also access to Occupational Health for staff to engage with as required. Managers are being encouraged to recommend and refer to Occupational Health proactively for staff who are in work to prevent sickness rates increasing with resulting absenteeism.
- 5.7.15 The social work force demographic is also considered, and staff are encouraged to attend relevant staff network meetings for LGBTQ, Autistic Spectrum Disorder staff network, Race Equality Network and Menopause and Andropause staff network.

## **5.8 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

- 5.8.1 Social Work England (SWE) is the registering body for over 100,000 social workers in England. Social Worker is a protected title, and it is against the law to practice as or take up a post of a social worker without being registered with SWE. The regulator has a set of practice standards and code of conduct by which registered social workers must adhere to. Social workers renew registration on an annual basis. CPD is a prerequisite for renewal of social worker registration. As Principal Social Worker I monitor and support social workers to meet the requirements of registration. As registration/reregistration is fundamental in order to be permitted to practice as a social worker I lead on ensuring each worker – whether in work or on leave is registered as required.

Professional Registration	
Questions	Score
I am confident my organisation would support me if I challenged unsafe practice or reported other concerns about services	86
I have found the registration/ re-registration process with Social Work England straightforward	90
My organisation promotes a working environment that upholds ethical practice and quality standards	92
My organisation supports me in keeping my CPD record up to date on the Social Work England website	86
My organisation understands, supports and provides conditions for social work practice that help me meet my professional standards	90
I am aware of the circumstances under which I could be referred to the regulator	91

5.8.2 In order to maintain and develop our workforce, Northumberland, in line with our learning culture ethos, continues to offer comprehensive and fully funded training and CPD opportunities (albeit virtually due to adapting to the current situation).

CPD - Continuous Professional Development	
Questions	Score
(If you have completed the ASYE in the last three years in your current organisation) My ASYE programme was effective in helping me learn and develop as a social worker and be more confident	89
I take action to ensure I am up to date with my CPD	91
My organisation has non-discriminatory and transparent systems to enable all social workers to develop their professional skills, knowledge, specialisms and AMHP, Practice Educator, Practice Supervisor careers including access to accredited courses	88
My organisation provides effective induction for all social workers when they join the organisation	84
My organisation provides regular/ annual appraisals (or performance reviews) that are relevant for social workers	92
Within my organisation, I have an up to date plan of my professional development needs and how I and my employer will contribute to them	84
I have dedicated time, resources, opportunities and support to carry out my CPD and record my learning in line with regulatory requirements	76
Through my organisation, I can access funded non-mandatory CPD	78

5.8.3 We review our training/learning plan on an annual basis during consultation with frontline practitioners/managers to understand what actually impacts/nurtures practice and more importantly what creates positive outcomes for children and families. National themes are also considered to inform our offer. We also offer competitive salaries and graded career structures.

5.8.4 The Advanced Practitioner has been effective in terms of addressing pressure points in the service, whilst offering a career pathway for those experienced staff who want to remain in practice and not move into management positions.

5.8.5 The implementation of the staff development structure recognises and encourages staff to develop expertise in specific areas of practice, acknowledging this with an Advanced Practitioner status. Further development of this role will ensure Northumberland has 'champions' in their given service area interest/passion, resulting in CPD via regular research and dissemination of knowledge to staff across Children's.

5.8.7 Quality assurance has been developed further, incorporating practice days to fully understand the worker experience. We continue to include all levels of staff and the use of peer audit to ensure everyone understands their role as a leader, taking responsibility for their own practice and supporting others also, in line with our Leadership Pledge around accountability, offering high support and constructive challenge.

5.8.8 Improvement in practice standards continues by building upon initiatives around:

- Retention/restructure
- Continued CPD and learning offer
- Workforce strategy
- Regional workforce links

## **5.9 Practice and issues which impact social workers**

5.9.1 Practice development and improvement is one of the key functions of the Principal Social Worker; offering high support and high challenge in order to continually develop staff.

5.9.2 During 2020/21 the leadership team have continually worked on the Improvement Plan. Participation by myself and senior representatives from Social Care, Early Help, Performance Team, Health and Education and the LSCB, assists in providing a comprehensive audit programme which measures the impact of the improvements. During 2020/21 a range of themed and standard audits have been completed and the process has been continuously refined and adapted to explore different areas of practice. This has been recognised by Ofsted.

*'Leaders make good use of the improved performance and quality assurance framework. Learning from audits, practice days and complaints enables leaders to review progress and the impact of practice on children's experiences effectively. A recent review of auditing has led to the focus of future audits moving from one of compliance to one of quality. Early indicators are that this new model provides an improved focus on identifying learning opportunities for staff.'*

5.9.3 The audits have identified some key areas for further improvement, and these are fed back to the work force and related training put in place. The next task within the audit plan is to track the direction of travel in specific areas to monitor progress. Impact on practice and outcomes for children and families continues to be a key theme moving forward.

5.9.4 There is access for all social workers/social care staff to a web-based children's social care research site. (Community Care Inform) In collaboration with the 12 Local Authorities regionally, the same research tool has been commissioned. It is

envisaged this will/has assisted in consistency and standardisation of practice and resourceful whilst considering financial prudence.

5.9.5 It is crucial to provide a common set of principles and a practice framework within which social workers can practice with confidence. Signs of Safety (SoS) which is a recognised model of social work intervention had been utilised. Training has been refreshed and the recording system as been adapted to reflect SoS requirements, thus providing social workers more time to build relationships and less on the demands of recording in duplication.

5.9.6 There is regular attendance by a SoS Consultant and practice champions identified and appointed from across all areas of social care practice. There are 4 workstreams chaired by Senior Management to ensure strategy aligns with operational practice. These consist of:

- Learning and Development
- Systems
- Quality Assurance
- Comms and Partnership

5.9.7 Senior managers are role modelling the use of this approach in order to instil confidence to frontline staff. Effective communication is key to ensuring consistency of message to all areas, especially here in Northumberland where staff are dispersed over a large geographical area. SoS discussions are set as a regular agenda item during Team Meetings.

5.9.8 The benefits of this approach are being seen. A focus now is to ensure practice is not only measurable but meaningful. Please see the 5 Meaningful Measures;

## Counting what Counts

<b>Meaningful Measure 1</b>	Keeping children safe, supported, and improving their lives.
<b>Meaningful Measure 2</b>	Making sure we are working with children, parents, important family and friends so that they are fully involved in developing plans that are clear about who will do what and when.
<b>Meaningful Measure 3</b>	Making sure that children are living safely and securely as soon as possible.
<b>Meaningful Measure 4</b>	Making sure families and staff from all services work with each other to make things better for children.
<b>Meaningful Measure 5</b>	Offer the right training and supervision to improve confidence, skills, and knowledge of workers.

- 5.9.9 Participation and attendance at training via the 'Learning Offer' provided to social workers is being developed further to ensure this is resource effective and has the desired effect of continually improving practice.
- 5.9.10 For training where places are numbered, specific social workers are identified to attend and then encouraged to disseminate the learning to their team/s on their return. This is a development opportunity for attendees who improve skills in identifying key points from the training and presenting/sharing their learning. Every opportunity is utilised to instil confidence and accountability in our staff.
- 5.9.11 We recognise multi agency partnership working as fundamental to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents and encourage effective relationship building/networking. After all, safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility.

### Strategic Partnerships

Questions	Score
I have good and effective relationships with key partners such as in the NHS, wider social care, education, housing, the third sector etc	90
My employer has a clear policy for recruiting, training and supporting social workers to train as practice educators, and practice supervisors	85

- 5.9.12 We also recognise the importance of developing role models for new and current staff therefore prioritise staff development via the Practice Educator role and practice supervisor role mentioned above.
- 5.9.13 Evaluation of impact for children and families is and remains a priority. We have further developed a feedback strategy in order to ensure the voice of children and families is heard and considered in all elements of practice. Feedback is collated via numerous routes including direct interaction with children and families by auditors, feedback questionnaire during conferences, via the complaints process. All of the information collated is utilised to continually develop practice.

## 5.10 Raising the profile of social work nationally and regionally

- 5.10.1 I have continued attendance at national and regional meetings as the Chair of the regional PSW Network. I have contributed to and maintained a Northumberland Children's presence in national practice developments. I have also maintained virtual contact with the Chief Social Worker for England and the DfE.

## 5.11 Priorities for 2022

- Whilst Ofsted recognised the significant progress made, we are keen to further develop ourselves and our practitioners to address areas identified during the Inspection.
- Since January 2020 (Inspection) we have focused on the quality of all child/ren's plans by continually implementing the Signs of Safety Model. We actively encourage staff to work 'with families' in the best interests of their children as opposed 'doing to families' as families and networks are the experts of their lives.
- The quality of analysis and more importantly 'impact on children' is an area of continual development.
- We have worked on the overall quality of the recording of management oversight in supervision records.
- Recovery planning to emerge from the pandemic and adapt service delivery and workforce planning in light of the learning.
- We will maintain consistency and momentum of embedding Signs of Safety into all elements of practice and leadership.
- We will continue implementing the Leadership Pledge across all levels of staffing to ensure all staff recognise themselves as leaders, ensuring hierarchy is not a barrier to positive communication in the best interests of children.
- Further develop a robust and creative strategy for recruitment of experienced staff - to include ongoing retention.
- Review the staffing structure to meet demand across the service.
- Continue to adapt and learn from the quality assurance programme, (audits/practice days/themes from complaints/) - to ensure all auditors prioritise service user feedback.
- Consider and identify CPD for social workers in line with key national themes and local requirements
- Remain engaged with regional and national social care initiatives to support and influence practice in Northumberland.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	Policies are aligned with statutory requirements and case law. Policies and procedures pertaining to safeguarding children are held within Tri.x and considered to inform this report.
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	Training costs are covered within the current training budget.
<b>Legal:</b>	Performance within the childcare legal cases, care planning and permanence for children as highlighted within the Children's Services improvement plan.
<b>Procurement:</b>	Regional research tool - Community Care Inform won the tender.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	Staffing, training and development implications.
<b>Property:</b>	None.
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	All procedures and policy changes will take account of impact and equalities for all groups.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Risks for Ofsted inspection if improvements and activities not implemented.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	None.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	Positive outcomes for children and families are realised if staff are well trained, supported and motivated.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	N/A
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Corporate health and wellbeing strategies are considered. Staff are encouraged/directed to source this invaluable support alongside supervision and training as required, to strengthen the service provided to children and families.
<b>Wards:</b>	N/A



## Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon, Service Director Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter obo Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Cath McEvoy-Carr obo Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

**Report Author:** Su Kaur, Principal Social Worker - Children and Families  
07966 325497; su.kaur@northumberland.gov.uk

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## **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**7TH APRIL 2022**

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### **NCC Digital Workforce & Digital Work-based Skills**

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

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services - Richard Wearmouth

Cabinet Member for Children's Services - Guy Renner Thompson

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### **Purpose of report**

To communicate to FACS plans to accelerate the delivery of digital work-based skills within Northumberland County.

The proposal has internal and external facing objectives in developing digital work-based skills across the County of Northumberland to the advantage of residents and businesses but also providing a mechanism for NCC to build and sustain its own digital workforce within the area of Information Services and other areas with growing volumes of digital functions.

### **Recommendations:**

FACS is recommended to:

1. Acknowledge the proposal to appoint a specialist digital apprenticeship provider to partner with Northumberland County Council, enhancing the apprenticeship function of Northumberland Skills and delivering objectives within Northumberland Strategic Skills Plan 2021-25 (Funded by Levy & ESFA apprenticeship funding).
2. Acknowledge the proposal for NCC Education Directorate to appoint a Digital Development Lead (2-year FT) to accelerate digital skills and education advancements (within existing staffing budget).
3. Acknowledge the links between this proposal and the proposal of HR & OD to recruit a cohort of circa 10/12 digital apprentices to join Information Services on a pilot programme (funded by HR&OD apprenticeship wage support budget).

## Link to Corporate Plans

NCC Digital Workforce & Skills proposal is in strong accordance with the **Connecting**, **Learning** and **Thriving** priorities of NCC Corporate Plan 2020-21.

## Key issues

The current exponential growth of the thriving digital sector within the UK economy is well documented, as are the challenges around current demand and supply of digital skills.

This thriving sector is equally relevant locally within the north east region where the median digital tech sector salary is 26% greater than the all-sector median, with digital tech roles making up 16% of advertised roles in the North East region. Equally, new job roles are emerging in the work-from-anywhere environment with digital tech employers posting significant opportunities as '*location: anywhere*' and a new range of roles including directors and managers of '*remote work*' to oversee teams who will never enter the office, this bringing wider ranging opportunity to residents with digital skills and experience.

Despite the digital opportunities emerging, for young residents looking to move into digital sector careers in Northumberland, there are not yet sufficient well-defined and accessible pathways into work-based training and employment available.

Increasing accessibility for Northumberland residents to enter high value careers via work-based vocational pathways in the digital sector contributes to tackling the issues around low qualification attainment level where too many residents hold low level or no qualifications. It also brings opportunity to contribute to the problem of too few residents holding higher level qualifications compared to national levels, higher-level digital apprenticeships can be progressed to via academic or vocational routes on offer in this proposal. This in turn will provide benefits in respect of the clear link between qualification level and economic participation and those who hold no qualifications and who are unemployed.

As a result of the development of the digital work-based training and employment pathways described Northumberland County Council will have access to a previously unavailable mechanism by which to grow its own talent pool of digital technicians operating within Information Services area.

## **Background**

Northumberland Skills service area is undergoing transformation, a more current and fit for purpose digital curriculum is under development for school leavers and adults. With the recent appointment of an Apprenticeship Development Manager the capacity to further develop work-based education and training is in place with a key priority being developing provision to support and provide opportunity within the thriving digital sector.

Keeping abreast of growth and technological development in the digital sector creates challenges for education providers who are well established, let alone those on a development journey. As such, to allow Northumberland Skills to make sufficient development in this area, it is intended to enter a formal sub-contract relationship with a specialist digital provider with a strong track record.

This is intended to have both internal and external facing benefits, to contribute to building sufficiency and sustainability in NCC digital workforce as well as allowing Northumberland Skills to support training within digital roles for employers and residents in Northumberland.

The proposed vehicle for delivering this will be a formal apprenticeship provider subcontracting arrangement, implemented via a robust, transparent and ESFA compliant tendering process. Northumberland Skills, part of Northumberland County Council, would be the lead provider governing the delivery with programmes funded using apprenticeship levy.

It is also proposed that a Band 10 Digital Development Lead be appointed on a 2-year fixed term contract, reviewed after 2 years for impact and continuation, funded by Education Directorate staffing budget.

It is proposed that this role would be responsible for:

- Developing the digital apprenticeship offer within NCC to enhance the quality and impact of the internally grown digital workforce, this will include working with specialist digital apprenticeship providers to do so.
- Developing the digital apprenticeship offer more broadly across the county, again working with specialist digital apprenticeship providers to do so.
- Working alongside NCC School Improvement, including NCC ICT School Curriculum Team, to develop digital skills, digital innovation and digital provision within Northumberland schools.
- Promote digital careers throughout Northumberland schools, linking with all careers functions, linking schools to digital industry and opportunity.
- Provide digital provision development to support Northumberland Skills.

- Create closer links between the digital sector and education within Northumberland to catalyse local opportunity.
- Work closely with the NCC IT/Digital team to support the delivery of the digital strategy.
- Be an active member of the Digital Strategy Board to ensure that Digital Skills is represented in the board and digital skills related initiatives are prioritised and supported accordingly

The proposal will future proof NCC digital workforce via recruitment and training of an initial cohort of apprentices to operate within Northumberland County Council, then continue to maintain NCC digital workforce with recruitment of apprentices as/when demand emerges. The pilot cohort would work within NCC Information Services, allowing internally grown talent to develop the precise skills, knowledge and professional behaviours required by the directorate in which they operate.

HR & OD would recruit the apprentices with year 1 salary of £16,084 and year 2 & 3 at £19,312. Entry requirements will be to hold GCSE Maths and English Grade 4 as a minimum as well as those entry requirements recommended by the sub-contracted provider to support success on programme. The cohort would not be included in staffing ratios initially to allow trainees to undertake their 20% off the job training and engage in other developmental activities. HR & OD propose that wages for the posts would be supported via the Apprenticeship Wage Support budget which is reserved to build the skills required for NCC future workforce needs.

Wider than NCC, the proposal will support the economy of Northumberland by providing a range of entry level, technician level and higher-level digital apprenticeships, building sufficiency in the in-county digital workforce including serving employers wider than NCC operating in the digital sector and digital roles within all sectors, boosting Northumberland's contribution to the digital economy.

It will also provide greater opportunity for residents of Northumberland to enter high value digital careers including the emerging wave of high earning '*location anywhere*' roles in the digital sector, part of a growing fraction of the workforce which will never enter the office seen to emerge since the pandemic. This will bring regional and national earning potential to residents in the county without the need to leave the county, and potentially without the need to commute – contributing to carbon reduction priorities. This audience is intended to include full time learners progressing from digital programmes delivered by Northumberland Skills.

NCC will use current and new business networks to promote this opportunity to Northumberland employers. Given this will be a sub-contracted provision, NCC will also govern the programmes and their quality while benefiting from additional levy income created for Northumberland Skills service area.

**Implications:**

<b>Policy</b>	This proposal is in strong accordance with Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2020-21, Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019-24, Education & Skills Directorate priorities and Digital Strategy 2020-25.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	<p>Digital Development Lead (band 10) will be funded by education directorate staffing budget on a 2 year fixed term contract.</p> <p>Apprentices entering NCC digital workforce will be trained by the appointed specialist digital apprenticeship provider and will funded via NCC apprenticeship levy.</p> <p>NCC Apprentice wages will be funded by HR&amp;OD Apprenticeship Wage Support budget, they will have starting salary £16,084.</p> <p>Apprentices of other Northumberland employers who are trained by the appointed specialist digital apprenticeship provider will be funded via the employers own Levy fund or by ESFA (with employer contribution) for those employers of wage bill less than £3m.</p> <p>Northumberland Skills will draw down the apprenticeship levy and ESFA funding for all apprentices, circa 85% will be passed to the appointed specialist digital apprenticeship provider, circa 15% retained to cover management/admin.</p>
<b>Legal</b>	Consideration of Public Contract Regulations 2015 must be given if sub-contract reaches threshold levels in future years.
<b>Procurement</b>	Formal tendering will be required to put in place a subcontracting agreement to be compliant with ESFA funding rules.
<b>Human Resources</b>	Coordination activity with departments via HR & OD is required in order to forward plan digital workforce demand and recruitment, this requiring a manageable amount of capacity to be allocated.
<b>Property</b>	NCC digital apprenticeships will be delivered in current work areas and some remotely in part, no property impact.
<b>Equalities</b>	Equalities impact assessment is appended to this briefing

(Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	All activity of NCC digital apprentices will fall under current workplace risk assessment.
<b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>	This report has considered Section 17 (CDA) and the duty it imposes and there are no implications arising from it.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The proposals set out in this report are designed to contribute significant value to residents (access to careers & earning potential) and to employers (building digital workforce).
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	This proposal brings potential for learning and working via digital platforms which will reduce carbon production by enhancing agile working capabilities of residents.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Indirectly, sustaining a high value career is inextricably linked to achieving greater levels of health & wellbeing of individuals.
<b>Wards</b>	Applicable to all wards.

### **Background papers:**

#### **Appendix 01 - NCC Digital Workforce & Digital Skills - Equalities Impact Assessment**



Appendix 01 - NCC  
Digital Workforce & E

### **Report Sign Off**

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



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# **Northumberland County Council**

## **Family and Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2021 - 2022**

Page 61

Chris Angus, Scrutiny Officer  
01670 622604 - [Chris.Angus@Northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.Angus@Northumberland.gov.uk)

22 March 2022 - CA

Agenda Item 8

## 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**

7 April 2022

Page 64	<b>PRE-SCRUTINY:- Informal Consultation on School Organisation for the Coquet Partnership</b>	This report sets out the findings of the informal meetings that have taken place with schools in the Berwick Partnership since April 2021 to discuss the organisational issues facing the partnership and to identify potential models of organisation that could address those issues. The results of an informal survey with parents and the wider community in the area served by Berwick Partnership are also included in the report.
	Development of Family Hubs	Update for members on the development and progress of family hubs in Northumberland.
	Annual Report of Principle Social Worker	To advise and update the Scrutiny Committee about the input and work of the Principal Social Worker in 2020/21 and an overview of the quality of practice and development needs of frontline social workers.
	Digital Skills Paper	To communicate to FACS plans to accelerate the delivery of digital work-based skills within Northumberland County

21 April 2022

	<b>PRE-SCRUTINY:- Outline Business Case for the New school Buildings for Astley Community High and Whytrig Middle Schools</b>	
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**Northumberland County Council  
Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2021-2022**

Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1	17 June 2021	Impact of COVID pandemic on SEND services	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted and the support provided over this period be recognised.	Further report to come to the committee on CYPS, waiting times and impact of COVID of children's mental health.
2	17 June 2021	Winter Support Grant Update	<b>RESOLVED</b> that:  1. The content of the report and the successful implementation of the initiatives undertaken with the funding from the Winter Support Grant be noted.  2. The strategy, roll-out and benefits of the activities for children and young people organised through the Holiday Activity Fund across Northumberland during the Easter Holiday be noted.	No further action
3	2 September 2021	Schools Forum Role and Decision Making Powers	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the report be noted	No further action
4	2 September 2021	SEND Revisit	<b>RESOLVED</b> that:  1. The information be noted;  2. A regular update be provided to allow the Committee to provide advice and support.	A further update to return to the Committee at a later date.

5	2 September 2021	Peer Review For Care Leavers Service Update	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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.
Page 66	7 October 2021	<b>Seaton Valley Federation</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that <b>Cabinet</b> 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	<b>Proposals for Atkinson House</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 12 October, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments
9	7 October 2021	<b>School Organisation Plan for 2021 – 2024</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>Education Infrastructure Contribution Policy</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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)	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted.	No further action
15	4 November 2021	North East Submission to the Care Review	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted	No further action
16	2 December 2021	Health Education England & NCC Project Choice	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
18	2 December 2021	Northumberland Skills Pathfinder - Curriculum Research	<b>RESOLVED</b> that:	At its meeting on 7 December, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the content and general approach of the Northumberland Skills Pathfinder Curriculum Research be noted;</li> <li>2. the use of the document with internal NCC stakeholder groups be authorised; and</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	
19	6 January 2022	Relocation of Actkinson house	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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.
23	3 February 2022	Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the content of the report be noted.	No further action
25	3 February 2022	Adult Learning Service Annual Report: Learning and Skills Service	<b>RESOLVED</b> that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The content of the annual report be noted.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>4. The progress in respect of the improvement actions set out in the 2019/20 report be noted.</li> <li>5. The identified areas for improvement and the routines established to monitor progress be agreed.</li> </ol>	No further action
26	3 February 2022	Sufficiency Strategy	<b>RESOLVED</b> 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	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the information be noted.	No further action

28	3 February 2022	Annual Engagement Statement	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the information be noted.	No further action
29	3 February 2022	OFSTED Inspection Framework	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the information and range of inspections be noted.	No further action
30	3 March 2022	Report on Final Decision on Statutory Proposals for Atkinson House		
31	3 March 2022	Director of Education Annual Report: Key Educational Outcomes (2020-2021 Academic Year)		
32	3 March 2022	Safeguarding Activity Trend		
33	3 March 2022	School Transport Governance Arrangements		