

# Public Document Pack



## Northumberland County Council

**Your ref:**

**Our ref:**

**Enquiries to:** Lesley Little

**Email:** Lesley.Little@northumberland.gov.uk

**Tel direct:** 01670 622614

**Date:** Wednesday, 31 August 2022

### **PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF TIME**

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL** on **THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2022** at **2.00 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Rick O'Farrell  
Interim Chief Executive

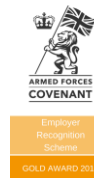
**To Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee members as follows:-**

**C Ball, A Dale, W Daley (Chair), R Dodd (Vice-Chair), C Dunbar, S Fairless-Aitken, M Richardson, M Swinburn, T Thorne and A Watson**

**Co-opted Members: A Hodgson, L Houghton, D Lennox, P Rickeard, J Sanderson**



**Rick O'Farrell, Interim Chief Executive**  
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## AGENDA

### PART I

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

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

#### 2. MINUTES

(Pages 1  
- 6)

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on Thursday 7 July 2022, as circulated, to be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Unless already entered in the Council's Register of Members' interests, members are required where a matter arises at a meeting;

- a. Which **directly relates to** Disclosable Pecuniary Interest ('DPI') as set out in Appendix B, Table 1 of the Code of Conduct, to disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote and not to remain in room. Where members have a DPI or if the matter concerns an executive function and is being considered by a Cabinet Member with a DPI they must notify the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with the matter.
- b. Which **directly relates to** the financial interest or well being of a Other Registrable Interest as set out in Appendix B, Table 2 of the Code of Conduct to disclose the interest and only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain the room.
- c. Which **directly relates to** their financial interest or well-being (and is not DPI) or the financial well being of a relative or close associate, to declare the interest and members may only speak on the matter if members of the public are also allowed to speak. Otherwise, the member must not take part in discussion or vote on the matter and must leave the room.
- d. Which **affects** the financial well-being of the member, a relative or close associate or a body included under the Other Registrable Interests column in Table 2, to disclose the interest and apply the test set out at paragraph 9 of Appendix B before deciding whether they may remain in the meeting.
- e. Where Members have or a Cabinet Member has an Other Registrable Interest or Non Registrable Interest in a matter being considered in exercise of their executive function, they must notify

the Monitoring Officer and arrange for somebody else to deal with it.

NB Any member needing clarification must contact [monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@northumberland.gov.uk). Members are referred to the Code of Conduct which contains the matters above in full. Please refer to the guidance on disclosures at the rear of this agenda letter.

**4. FORWARD PLAN** (Pages 7 - 16)

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

**5. PERFORMANCE & FINANCE REPORT (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)** (Pages 17 - 28)

Members asked to consider current performance and the budgetary position as at June 2022 for services within the Committee's terms of reference.

**6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE COQUET PARTNERSHIP** (Pages 29 - 104)

The report to Cabinet sets out the analysis of feedback from consultation on proposals for schools in the Coquet Partnership to reorganise to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education. It also sets out an analysis of the feedback on the proposal to provide additional specialist SEND places to meet the growing need for places for children and young people diagnosed with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) within the Coquet Partnership area.

Cabinet is being asked to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out proposals to reorganise schools (excluding NCEA Warkworth Primary which is already a primary school) in the Coquet Partnership within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, and to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal to increase the number of pupils at Barndale House Special School through the expansion of the school onto an additional site in Amble.

Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the report on Tuesday 13 September 2022.

**7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPRESENTATIONS 2021-2022** (Pages 105 - 118)

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 require the submission of an Annual Report by every local authority which "provides a mechanism by which the local authority can be kept informed of the operation of its complaints procedure."

The report has been prepared in conjunction with regulatory requirements and provides data and analysis of information in relation to feedback from

complaints, compliments and other enquiries, submitted to Children's Services and those referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This information is produced with the aim of providing intelligence to show where lessons can be learned and service improvements may be required. The data used for this report has been received during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

- 8. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT** (Pages 119 - 154)
- The report is to share the content and findings of the children's social care self-assessment. The self-assessment supports an evaluation of the progress and current practice in children's social care and identifies future actions to support the continuous improvement that is required as we strive to achieve our vision of being a service where meeting the needs of children, young people and families is the focus so that they get the best out of life.
- 9. PROPOSAL IN RELATION TO FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE YOUTH SERVICE** (Pages 155 - 160)
- The report gives Members of the Committee an overview of the activity in relation to a recent review of the activity and impact of the Youth Service and provide a proposal for future arrangements of Northumberland County Council managed Youth Service activity across the county linked to the development of the Family Hub model.
- 10. MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHUMBERLAND** (Pages 161 - 176)
- The purpose of the report is to provide a current overview of support for children and young people with mental health needs and to outline future plans. It offers a summary overview of the support available through the graduated response for mental health for children and young people from a number of services.
- 11. FAMILY HUB DEVELOPMENT** (Pages 177 - 184)
- The report provides an update in relation to DfE funding for Family Hub developments in Northumberland.
- 12. FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2022/23** (Pages 185 - 194)
- Members are asked to review and note the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and Monitoring Report.
- 13. URGENT BUSINESS**

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

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

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date of meeting:</b>	
<b>Meeting:</b>			
<b>Item to which your interest relates:</b>			
<b>Nature of Interest i.e. either disclosable pecuniary interest (as defined by Table 1 of Appendix B to the Code of Conduct, Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest (as defined by Appendix B to Code of Conduct) (please give details):</b>			
<b>Are you intending to withdraw from the meeting?</b>		Yes - <input type="checkbox"/>	No - <input type="checkbox"/>

## Registering Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

**"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest"** means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

**"Partner"** means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

### Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest.

Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

### Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

### Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in **Table 1**) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –

- a. your own financial interest or well-being;
- b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
- c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2** you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well- being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

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## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

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

At the meeting of the **Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held at Council Chamber - County Hall on Thursday, 7 July 2022 at 10.00 am.

#### PRESENT

W Daley (Chair) (in the Chair)

#### COUNCILLORS

A Dale  
S Fairless-Aitken  
M Swinburn

C Dunbar  
M Richardson  
A Watson

#### CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

A Hodgson

D Lennox

#### TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

J Sanderson

#### OFFICERS

C Angus  
S Barron

L Little  
L Spaven

D Street

Scrutiny Officer  
Strategic Lead for SEND & Designated  
Clinical Officer  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Senior Manager, Residential & Family  
Placements  
Deputy Director of Education

#### 14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ball, Dodd, Thorne and Renner-Thompson along with A Kingham and G Reiter.

#### 15 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 May 2022, as circulated, be agreed as a true record of each and be signed by the Chair.

## 16 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 17 SEND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

S Barron, Strategic Lead for SEND & Designated Clinical Officer, provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. Members were advised that the Council had been approached by Ofsted to pilot a new inspection framework which would provide an opportunity for external scrutiny and test understanding of progress with a number of actions undertaken by inspectors. The Learning from this pilot inspection was that there was a passion and commitment within the local area SEND partnership; a strong understanding of the needs of children with SEND; SEND strategy was strong and based on a robust needs assessment; the partnership knew itself well and early help support within children's social care was an "incredible strength" with families feeling very well supported. Progress on the four key strategic priorities of the SEND Strategy was detailed in the report.

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

- A data analysis had just been undertaken on where Northumberland was in relation to the provision of EHCPs and the national picture. Northumberland was average in terms of the number of children and young people who were declined for a EHC needs assessment however were very timely in support of EHCPs, with the national at approximately 60% and Northumberland in the low 90%. Northumberland's performance around the system was strong, but was continually looking to improve the quality of EHCP, and was also looking at improving the communication around the whole process.
- In relation to sensory profiling, it was confirmed that the model used was based on best practice and staff with the relevant experience had been recruited. It was likely that the new model would include advice online so that access to help would be available even before referral to the service.
- Ongoing work had been carried out throughout the year to expand specialist SEND provision in the County. The growth in EHCPs over the last 5 years had increased by approximately 10% creating more demand for specialist places. Between September 2021 and September 22 there would be a 19% increase in the number of specialist places and work was also being extended with the independent sector and alternative providers who were better placed to meet individual needs. The strategy for the next five years would be reported to this Committee in October.
- In relation to support and challenge for schools, Members were advised that the analysis of need was better now than ever before with the vast majority of SEND learners served well. Whilst the report highlighted the whole school SEND project, there were other workstreams tied to SEND and School Improvement which provided a lot of support and challenge to schools.
- The 10% year on year growth of children and young people with EHCPs was a national figure and was one of the reasons for the release of the

Government Green Paper which was welcomed.

- There were 402 early years providers across the County who were all very well supported by the Early Years team which included three inclusion consultants. Procedures were in place that when issues were recognised either by the early years settings or parents, then liaison would take place with a consultant to see how individual needs could be met. There were also the same processes in place as those for school aged children with pathways for EHCP applications and financial support which allowed the setting to provide support over and above the usual levels and which could include training or additional staff. Portage could also be provided if more specialist provision was required. The statutory requirement for the 2 year old health and education check also assisted with early identification of additional need. The Early Years passport in which a series of supported assessments were undertaken which highlighted the pathway a learner was on had been highlighted as an area of good work.
- The three Specialist Practitioners posts had been planned for in conjunction with children's social care to provide the right skills mix and were over and above the existing service. This would strengthen the support for mental health and allow clinical oversight of the work undertaken.

It was noted that whilst there had been a lot of discussion surrounding early help for early years, that changes to circumstances could occur at any time and access to early help was important at any age.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted and the Committee supported the next steps to be taken.

## 18 **THE ANNUAL REPORT OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE 2021/22**

L Spaven, Senior Manager – Residential and Special Placements provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. The key highlights were outlined along with the aims and objectives for 2022/23. A day time event held recently for, and celebrating foster carers, had been very well attended and appreciated. Whilst it was too late to organise an event for this year, it was hoped to be able to reinstate a similar event for looked after children. Twenty new foster carers had been recruited over the past year and there was a constant recruitment drive for potential new foster carers to come forward.

It was confirmed that currently there were 27 children placed with foster carers who weren't Northumberland foster carers, but it was commented that sometimes children needed to be placed outside of this area. The difference in fee structures between private and local authority foster carers would possibly be the subject of a discussion at a later date.

The approximate timescale from applying to be foster carers to being approved was 4 to 6 months as there were a lot of checks to be undertaken and references to be obtained. This would be followed by skills training and a full assessment being undertaken before an application was put before the Fostering Panel for approval. Discussions were often held regarding children who needed

placements nearing the end of the process and once approved it might only be a short time before a child was placed with the new foster carer.

The Chair asked that the appreciation and thanks of the Committee be passed on to the fostering team and the foster carers themselves for making a difference to the lives of the young people.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted and the performance information for the period April 2021 – March 2022 be acknowledged.

19 **BRIEFING NOTE - POTENTIAL MULTI ACADEMY TRUST OPPORTUNITY**

A briefing note had been provided on the opportunity which was now open for Local Authorities to register their interest in developing a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which included the Council's previous interest in this area and work undertaken at that time. A Kingham, Joint Interim Director of Children's Services had written to all schools to ascertain interest and approximately 40 schools had registered their interest.

A concern was raised by a Member if there was a large rural MAT established for first/primary schools they would not link into the secondary schools and that this should be used as an opportunity to bring schools together in order to provide a seamless transition for children. It was clarified that for this particular opportunity it would be limited to 10 schools and it would make sense to encourage families of schools to work together.

In respect of a concern raised in respect of whether a Local Authority MAT school would be treated differently to a maintained school with different resources available, it was clarified that if this moved forward, the equity of school provision would be paramount. Any financial impact on individual school budgets would also need to be considered, but it could be that the sharing of leadership and back office staff would help school budgets.

The view of the Committee was to continue dialogue being cognisant of locality based issues and ensuring that the ethos of individual schools was not lost.

20 **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2022/23**

The work programme had been circulated for information and any issues which Members wished to bring to the Committee should be raised with the Chair or the Scrutiny Officer in the first instance. The Scrutiny Officer advised of a number of changes to the work programme and a revised work programme would be circulated after the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

21 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that following the Max Caller Report on Governance within the Council, as the Chair of this Committee he had asked that the number of delayed Subject Access Requests (SARs) in respect of children or looked after children which had been highlighted in the report be investigated. He had been assured that measures had been put in place to deal with outstanding SARs for looked after children and the detail of this would be shared with all Members after the meeting. If Members had any comments on the information once it had been circulated then they should contact himself or the Scrutiny Officer.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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## Forward Plan

### FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<p><b>Adult Social Care Reform</b>                      To inform the Cabinet about national guidance and funding announcements relating to the adult social care reforms scheduled for implementation from October 2023, and about work in progress to identify financial and other implications for the Council.                      (W. Pattison/N. Bradley - 01670 622868)</p>	Health and Wellbeing OSC 3 January 2023	13 September 2022
<p><b>Bamburgh Conservation Area Character Appraisal</b>                      Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to “formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”, but, more than that, a conservation area appraisal is a tool to help people understand what is important about a place and manage change within it.                      Bamburgh Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) provides an evidence base for managing change. By adopting a conservation area appraisal, planning authorities are better placed to give due and proportionate weight to the special interest of conservation areas. This will, in turn, result in better informed and balanced decisions in relation to the historic environment. An appraisal can also be used to</p>	N/A	13 September 2022

<p>support potential strategic plans and policies for the area, and to promote its conservation and regeneration. (C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)</p>		
<p><b>Energising Blyth: Culture and Placemaking Programme</b> This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval and key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the Energising Blyth Culture and Placemaking Programme (CPP). The CPP is a package of culture and placemaking measures in Blyth. This aims to catalyse Blyth's cultural revival, supporting the benefits of the wider investments in the town. This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. (W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker - 07919 217457)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Energising Blyth: Energy Central Campus Phase 1: Learning Hub</b> This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval and key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the Energy Central Campus Phase 1: Learning Hub. The Energy Central Campus (ECC) is a transformational, business-led skills, education and innovation development supporting growth in the low carbon energy sector in Blyth and the wider Northeast. This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. (W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker - 07919 217457)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022



<p><b>Energising Blyth: OREC Technology and Innovation Centre</b></p> <p>This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval of the Business Case and other key decisions regarding the development and delivery of the OREC Catapult new Centre. This is a business-led skills, education and innovation development adding to the cluster of facilities at OREC's site at the Port of Blyth and supporting Research and Development and growth in the low carbon energy sector in Blyth and the wider Northeast. It will be a key national asset driving forward the Government's Zero Carbon agenda and will generate.</p> <p>This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration Programme including projects supported by the Future High Streets Fund and Blyth Town Deal. It is also being funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, Innovate UK and OREC (W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker 07919 217457)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 30 June 2022. (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Food &amp; Feed, Safety &amp; Standards Service Plan 2022/23</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet, for its consideration and endorsement, the Food and Feed, Safety and Standards Service Plan for 2022/23. (C. Horncastle/Peter Simpson 07920 806260)</p>	Communities and Place OSC 31 August 2022	13 September 2022
<p><b>Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan</b></p>	N/A	13 September 2022

<p>To seek approval to formally 'make' the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan passed independent examination in March 2022. A local referendum will be held in the Parish of Haydon on 30 June 2022 and it is expected that there will be a majority vote in favour of using the Plan to make decisions on planning applications. The Council will then be obliged by statute to make the Neighbourhood Plan unless it considers that doing so would breach European Union obligations, and that action should be completed within 8 weeks of the date of the referendum. (C. Horncastle/S. Brannigan 07966 335 508)</p>		
<p><b>Proposals for the Coquet Partnership</b> This report sets out the feedback received from stakeholders arising from consultation on a proposal to reorganise the Coquet Partnership of schools to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education, with accompanying relevant recommendations in the light of this proposal.</p> <p>Cabinet may also be recommended to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal in relation to this proposal, which if approved would require Cabinet to make a final decision on the proposal at a later date. (G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston – 01670 6222810)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 8 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>
<p><b>Proposals for the allocation of the Public Health ring-fenced grant reserve</b> This report describes the process undertaken to agree proposals for additional investment in public health interventions from the ring-fenced public health grant; and to make recommendations.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing OSC 6 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>

<p>There is a requirement when using any funds from underspend to comply with the conditions of the use of the annual public health grant, which means that the funds must be spent on public health functions.</p> <p>This report describes a prioritisation exercise undertaken for allocation of part of the public health reserve that has accumulated from underspend. Criteria were developed and weighted to score bids that were sought from within the public health team and from other teams across the council. Criteria with the highest weighting were: 'Aim to reduce inequalities' (20%); and 'local need', 'evidence of impact/ effectiveness', and 'prevention' (each 15%). A higher score was given if the goal was primary prevention (preventing illness or maintaining health), in line with public health principles.</p> <p>(W. Pattison/J. Brown, 07796 312409/ L. Morgan, 07920 360093)</p>		
<p><b>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b></p> <p>The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading companies for 2022-23 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 12 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>
<p><b>Working together with VCSE – Non recurrent variation to VCSE Infrastructure Contract</b></p> <p>This purpose of this report is to seek approval to expand the current Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)</p>		<p>13 September 2022</p>

<p>Infrastructure contract to include additional funding obtained from NHS Northumberland CCG, now the Integrated Care Board, to support the Thriving Together work between Northumberland Communities Together and the VCSE (W. Pattison/M. Taylor - 01670 622430)</p>		
<p><b>Alnwick and Hexham Shopfront Design Guides</b>  Northumberland County Council is committed to retaining the special character of its conservation areas. In market towns such as Alnwick and Hexham, shops and commercial premises are a key element of the conservation areas and have a considerable impact on their overall appearance. Achieving a high standard of design in relation to shops and other businesses is important in underpinning commercial success.  The Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide, 2021 replaces the 'Design Guide for Shop Fronts' which was adopted by Alnwick District Council in 1995. It has been produced in partnership with Alnwick Civic Society. The Hexham Shopfront Design Guide, 2018 is an update of the 'Interim Design Package for Shopfronts and Their Advertisements', which was adopted by Tynedale Council in January 1990 and produced in association with the Hexham Civic Society. The updated Shopfront Design Guides are in line with national and local planning policies and contain guidance to assist developers, retailers, design professionals and building owners to prepare designs for shopfronts and other commercial premises which respond well to local character. They provide the Council with a set of criteria against which to assess the quality of proposed works when determining applications for planning permission and listed building consent.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>

(C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)		
<p><b>Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24</b>  Since 1 April 2013 the Council is required to have its own council tax support scheme to provide assistance to council taxpayers on low incomes. The scheme needs to be approved annually and assistance is by way or a reduction in the amount of council tax that is due.  The Council Tax Support Scheme needs County Council approval.  (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes – 01670 624351)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC  10 October 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022  Council 2 November 2022</p>
<p><b>Family Hubs Development</b>  Northumberland has been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who can receive additional funding to develop the Family Hub offer. The overall amount potentially available for Northumberland between Autumn 2022 and March 2025 is indicated to be between £3.321m and £3.446m. Work has been ongoing to develop the Family Hub model in Northumberland for some time, building on the already established Early Help Locality Model across the county.  (G. Renner Thompson/M. Connor - 01670 620349)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 8 September 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>
<p><b>“Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund” submission</b>  To seek Cabinet approval for a submission to the Department of Health and Social Care to comply with the grant conditions of the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund 2022 to 2023.  (W. Pattison/N. Bradley - 01670 622868)</p>		<p>11 October 2022</p>

<p><b>Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation</b></p> <p>This report sets out the feedback received from stakeholders arising from Phase 1 of informal consultation with stakeholders in the Berwick Partnership area and other relevant parties on whether any models of organisation that may be brought forward with specific proposals for schools (Phase 2) should consist of only 3-tier models of organisation or include 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) models of organisation.</p> <p>Cabinet is also asked to permit the initiation of the Phase 2 informal consultation with stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership and other relevant stakeholders on proposals for individual schools in the partnership. The outcomes of Phase 2 consultation would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date.</p> <p>(G. Renner Thompson/S. Aviston - 01670 6222810)</p>	<p>FACS OSC 6 October 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>
<p><b>Revised Joint Charter with Town, Parish and Community Councils</b></p> <p>This report updates Cabinet and seeks approval for the publication of the revised joint Charter between the Council and the Town, Parish and Community Councils (TPCCs) in Northumberland.</p> <p>This revised Charter includes minor amendments to the 2019 edition and has been prepared following consultation with Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC). It defines joint principles to enable the Council and TPCCs to work effectively together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Northumberland.</p> <p>(G. Sanderson/Iain Hedley -07747 473687)</p>	<p>TBC</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>

<p><b>Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27</b>  This report provides an update on the development of the 2023-24 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2023 to 2027. This report also details budget proposals for 2023-24 to meet the budget gap, as a basis for budget consultation, prior to the receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023-24 in December 2022.  (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon 01670 622168)</p>	CSEG 7 November 2022	8 November 2022
<p><b>Council Tax Base 2023/24</b>  The Council is required to set its council tax base annually. The tax base must be set between the 1st of December and 31st January. The tax base is a measure of the Council's taxable capacity which is used for the setting of its council tax. Legislation sets out the formula for calculation. Cabinet have delegated authority to approve the tax base.  (R. Wearmouth/G. Barnes – 01670 624351)</p>	Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 12 December 2022	13 December 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of September 2022</b>  The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 30 September 2022.  (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	13 December 2022
<p><b>Trading Companies' Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of September 2022</b>  The purpose of the report is to ensure that the Cabinet is informed of the current financial positions of its trading</p>	Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 12 December 2022	13 December 2022

<p>companies for 2022-23 (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197) (Confidential report)</p>		
<p><b>Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27</b> The report presents the updated Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27 to Cabinet following the receipt of the provisional local government settlement which is due to be announced during December 2022. The report will also include an update on the deliverability of savings. (R. Wearmouth/A. Elsdon 01670 622168)</p>	CSEG OSC 13 February 2022	14 February 2022 Council 22 February 2022
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of December 2022</b> The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 December 2022. (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	14 March 2023
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 – Position at the end of March 2023 (Provisional Outturn)</b> The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 March 2023 (provisional outturn) (R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)</p>	N/A	9 May 203





## Northumberland County Council

### **FAMILIES AND CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

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#### **PERFORMANCE & FINANCE REPORT (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)**

Report of Audrey Kingham and Graham Reiter, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services.

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

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#### **1. Purpose of report**

To consider current performance and the budgetary position as at June 2022 for services within the Committee's terms of reference.

#### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee notes the current performance, how it compares to benchmarks, and identifies any areas for further scrutiny.

#### **3. Link to Corporate Plan**

This report relates to the Living, Learning and Tackling Inequalities elements of the Corporate Plan.

#### **4. Key issues**

1. Children's Services continues to perform well against its targets, although within the field of Education and Skills, the picture is partially outdated due to there being no comparable achievement outcome results since 2019 (the next set will be available in September 2022).

2. Given the impact of the pandemic on education services in particular, benchmarking against previous years is provided not only for 2020/21, but also against 2018/19, which was the most recent “normal” academic year in terms of how services and education providers were operating.
3. There is a clear understanding of the underlying data for those indicators in need of improvement, and appropriate actions have been identified and communicated to the relevant parties.
4. Targets and amber tolerances for the key performance indicators have been reviewed.
5. The budgetary position continues to be challenging. The report provides the end of June data, although it is early within the financial year and care should be taken in drawing any conclusions about performance.

This report is for discussion.

## **5. Background**

The Service Statements across the Council set out priorities for delivering the Corporate Plan together with a performance framework covering past performance levels and future targets. The performance measures are captured on a web-enabled system and current performance is updated regularly so that the most recent information is available to Members, officers and the public.

This report uses the performance data for the quarter ending June 2022 for Children's Social Care (CSC) and Education & Skills (E&S). The suite of indicators in both services were reviewed during 2021 and were rationalised to reflect priorities. In May 2022, the targets and amber tolerances were reviewed for each indicator taking into account our knowledge of the recent trends and demand levels in Northumberland, the latest national averages and where we most want to improve in light of corporate priorities.

This report provides analysis of performance on those indicators that can be benchmarked against the national average where available, as well as providing the direction of travel against previous years, and against the targets set. Where there is no national average, i.e., if the indicator is a local one, the June 2022 figures are benchmarked against the position for the previous year in the case of CSC and against the position 3 years ago in the case of E&S (i.e., prior to the impact of the pandemic). The report also provides the budgetary update for the period up to June 2022.

For details on how Children's Services performs against its targets within the context of the whole Council, please refer to the quarter 4 report produced by the Business and Intelligence team. Members should note that in addition to this report, the Corporate Parenting Advisory Group receives bi-monthly performance reports on data relating to children looked after children (CLA) and care leavers, and the Audit Committee receives a 6 monthly update on external inspection scrutiny that has taken place in Children's Services and Adult Social Care. Those reports are available on request.

### **5.1 Children's Social Care:**

With reference to Appendix A, of the 8 CSC indicators where there is a national average, the department is currently performing better on 3, similar on 1, and poorer on 4. (The national averages are not contemporaneous with the local authority's more current data and in general are 12 months old.) The context behind this is that an increase in demand levels was seen in the quarter January – March 2022, which then stabilised in the following quarter, and this has manifested itself in higher numbers of contacts, referrals, numbers subject to a child protection plan and numbers needing to be in care during the last 2 quarters. Managers are also reporting that the work has increased in complexity. Coupled with this, we are still experiencing some challenges with home and school placement stability for children in care, and there are continued concerns over the

turnover of social workers, an issue this committee has previously received a report about.

Encouragingly, effective and creative early help and preventative work has ensured that statutory services have not been overwhelmed, manifesting itself in good outcomes for those involved with Early Help Family Workers, low rates of young people re-offending, social worker caseloads that are broadly equal to the latest national average, and improving outcomes for older care leavers in line with our corporate priorities.

Context and actions being taken for measures that are poorer than the national average are as follows:

### **Rate of children and young people subject to child protection (CP) plans per 10,000 (10K) population**

#### **Comments and actions:**

The figure for quarter 1 of 66 is a reduction from the last quarter, it having increased through 2021-22. The figure of 66 is similar to the regional average, but higher than the national average of 41. Application of thresholds, decision-making, and case planning are all reviewed during practice days and audit activity that take place in Children's Social Care.

### **Rate of Children Looked After (CLA) per 10,000 population**

#### **Comments and actions:**

The number of children in our care increased in the quarter after Christmas. Analysis showed that the number of children entering care had remained fairly constant, but the number exiting care had reduced, in particular via the adoption route. Also, fewer had turned 18 in that quarter, and thereby left care. Following this increase in quarter 4, quarter 1 saw the number of children needing to be looked after remain fairly stable. Northumberland's figure at the end of June of 73 per 10,000 remains one of the lowest in the region, is significantly below the regional average of 114, and slightly above the national average of 67. The legal gateway panel ensures that all safe and relevant options are considered and if care is needed, that clear plans are in place to proceed for the child.

### **% of Children Looked After who have been in care for 2.5 years or more, and who have been in the same placement for 2 years or more**

#### **Comments and actions:**

There was a marked reduction in February 2022, from 68% to 60%, which has slowly increased to 63% by the end of June 2022. From our data analysis, we understand why the figure is lower than it traditionally has been and that is due to none of the children or

young people who are in adoptive placements having been in care for over 2.5 years. Typically there have been between 9 and 12, adding between 6-10% to the figure. Other factors include some young people who had been in stable placements either turning 16 or being adopted and therefore dropping out of the cohort. We are progressing the project to develop further support for foster carers and have further developed our monitoring to support timely achievement of long-term placements where this is the plan for our Children Looked After.

### **% of CLA who have had 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months**

#### **Comments and actions:**

Performance in this area has dipped slightly during quarter 1 following improvement in the previous quarter. The latest figure of 12% is short of the national and regional average of 9%. The difference from the previous quarter in real terms is that 11 more children / young people had 3 or more placements in the last year. Whilst the latest figure for the end of June is more than we would wish, we are not seeing the high percentages that were being reported a year ago, and more integrated working between the Family Placement service, Virtual School and foster carers has been a significant factor in bringing that about. A sufficiency strategy setting out high level objectives has been to the scrutiny committee and placement stability is a priority within the corporate parenting strategy with a range of actions in place to increase sufficiency and further develop resilience and support for carers.

## **5.2 Education and Skills:**

With reference to the Education and Skills data in Appendix B, due to Covid 19, some of the usual measures do not have an update as pupil attainment data was not validated and therefore not comparable with previous years. However, all measures that could be updated, have been. The next data on key stage texts / exams will be available from September 2022.

There are 7 indicators for which there are national averages (NA), and the table shows that of the updated measures, 4 are better than the NA, 1 is poorer, and 2 are similar. Consistently very strong performance compared to the NA is being seen in the areas of: offering parents their first choice of school; take up of the statutory entitlement to free education for 2 year olds; and the proportion of schools with less than Good Ofsted gradings who are judged to be Taking Effective Action.

Those who need an Education, Health and Care Plan usually receive one quicker than is the case nationally, and whilst the timeliness fluctuates during the year, the overall picture is over 20% better than the national average. The quality of those plans is subject to audit and has improved in the last 2 years. Achievement of the 20 weeks time scale is expected to become increasingly challenging as demand for EHCPs increases, a phenomenon also seen nationally. This is reflected in the figures for June 2022, which were 53%, whereas they had ranged between 80-90+% over the previous 3 months.

Significant pressures on the Education Psychology (EP) team due to high demand are impacting on timeliness and a further recruitment drive and review of internal processes within the EP team is underway, and we are considering building capacity elsewhere in the system to increase support in schools for learners without EHCPs to try and manage demand.

With reference to appendix B, the proportion of pupils in good or outstanding primary schools is now more in line with the NA than was the case in 2018/19. The position in secondary schools also shows a significant improvement, is above the local target, but it is below the NA.

A higher number of pupils have been permanently excluded from secondary schools than was the case last year, and the figure at the end of June was higher than the corresponding period in 2018/19 (prior to the pandemic). Not all of the aspirational targets in this field are being met, but a working group has identified priority groups to focus on such as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) pupils and certain schools / academies. Positively, there has been an improvement in the proportion of permanently excluded pupils who are quickly back into another form of education following a permanent exclusion compared to the position in 2018/19, although the end of June figure was short of the 95% target.

The proportion of young people in years 12 and 13 who are either NEET (Not in employment, education or training) or whose destination is unknown has decreased recently, is equal to the position at June 2021, and only slightly higher than in 2018/19. Northumberland's latest figure of 4.9% is similar to the latest NA of 4.8%, and is significantly lower and therefore better than the latest regional average of 6.1%. The numbers whose destination is unknown continues to be encouragingly low. We know that those with SEND are disproportionately more likely to be NEET if they live in Northumberland than is the case elsewhere in the region and nationally and tackling it is a key focus for E&S and its partners. Actions are: Specific action plan related to Preparation for Adulthood; Health Education England supported internships and interns given opportunity to take work placement in NCC; Level 1 Welding Course offer at new Port of Blyth Training Centre with appropriate marketing campaign; a commitment to develop an offer in Construction and in particular have a campaign that targets a NEET audience in SE Northumberland.

Context and actions being taken for measures that are poorer than the national average are as follows:

### **% of pupils who are in good or outstanding secondary schools -**

#### **Comments and actions:**

The figures in the last 2 quarters have improved as a result of a middle school moving from Requires Improvement to Good and a high school achieving a Good judgement.

Despite this improvement, the latest figure of 73% remains lower than the national average of 82%. The actual proportion of secondary schools judged as Good or Outstanding was 77% at the end of June 2022, which equates to 23 / 30 schools, and this is just below the national average of 78%. A report on the impact of the local authority School Improvement team recently went to the Family and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FACS) and it demonstrated the improvements that have been made in supporting school performance since the focused visit in 2013. The presentation that accompanied that report can be found [here](#). Where there are concerns that schools may drop below Good, an appropriate level of support is provided by the LA's improvement partners.

## **6. Children's Services Forecast Outturn 2022-23 Position**

Members should note that it is early in the year and caution should be exercised in drawing any firm conclusions about budgetary performance at this point.

### **6.1 Children's Social Care**

The Projected Revenue Outturn 2022-23 for Children's Social Care shows that the position at the end of June is £0.373 million forecast overspend. There is a detailed report that provides information on where within the service the projected under and overspends are, and this is primarily due to increased costs of external residential placements.

### **6.2 Education and Skills Service**

The Projected Revenue Outturn 2022-23 for Education and Skills shows that the position at the end of June is a £1.186 million forecast overspend. The key factor is increases relating to SEN home to school transport, with increased fuel costs and driver availability being major challenges, with some operators being unable to fulfil contracts, and the need to re-tender resulting in increased costs. A detailed report has been prepared on this issue for Executive recommendations and Cabinet decisions.

The forecast position regarding the Capital programme in Education and Skills is shown below.

	<b>Current 2022-23 Budget</b>	<b>2022-23 Actual Exp.</b>	<b>Forecast Exp.</b>	<b>Net Variance</b>	<b>Over / (Under) spend</b>	<b>Forecast Reprofiling</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>31.861</b>	<b>1.242</b>	<b>20.393</b>	<b>(11.468)</b>	<b>0.104</b>	<b>(11.572)</b>

The Director is provided with details of the position on each scheme, actions being taken within the year and plans for re-profiling the budget.

Savings of £0.150m relating to transfer of funds to the DSG and reduction in enhanced pensions are expected to be achieved in full.



## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Indicators in this report relate to the Living, Learning and Tackling Inequalities elements of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Many of the measures included in the framework have a value for money component. At the end of June 2022, Children's Social Care has a provisional forecast of a £0.373 million overspend; while Education and Skills had a provisional forecast of a £1.186 million overspend relating to SEN home to school transport and a detailed report has been prepared in relation to this issue for Executive recommendations and Cabinet decisions.
<b>Legal</b>	The report refers to children and young people in the care system and to re-offending rates.
<b>Procurement</b>	n/a
<b>Human Resources</b>	Having enough experienced social workers is essential for a high performing Children's Social Care service.
<b>Property</b>	n/a
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No x N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	n/a
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	n/a
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	The performance framework includes measures on offending.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The framework includes a number of measures relevant to providing services to customers
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	n/a
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Indicators referenced in the report impact on the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
<b>Wards</b>	All

## 8. Background papers:

Details of the County Council's performance management arrangements including access to the Northumberland web-enabled performance system can be found at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Policy/Performance.aspx#corporateperformancemanagementarrangements>

## 9. Report sign off

Monitoring Officer	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Audrey Kingham and Graham Reiter, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

## 10. Author and Contact Details

This report has been prepared on behalf of Audrey Kingham and Graham Reiter, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services. For further information, contact Alan Hartwell at [Alan.Hartwell@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Alan.Hartwell@northumberland.gov.uk).

**Appendix A – Children’s Social Care benchmarking against national averages / previous year \***

	Measure	Current Target	Current Performance Jun 2022	Direction of Travel vs Jun 2021	Current Performance vs target	Current Performance vs National Average
1	% of EHFV cases closed because desired outcomes have been met *	75	77	<b>77 vs 80</b>	<b>77 vs 75</b>	Not applicable
2	% Staff turnover within the social work workforce (annual DFE return)	15.4	15.8	<b>15.8 vs 14.7</b>	<b>15.8 vs 15.0</b>	<b>15.8 vs 15.4</b>
3	Rate of proven re-offending by young offenders	25	16.7	<b>16.7 vs 23.5</b>	<b>16.7 vs 25.0</b>	<b>16.7 vs 32.3</b>
4	Rate of children and young people subject to child protection plans per 10,000 popn	67	66	<b>66 vs 59</b>	<b>66 vs 67</b>	<b>66 vs 41</b>
5	Rate of Looked After Children (LAC) per 10,000 popn	74.0	73	<b>73 vs 74</b>	<b>73 vs 74</b>	<b>73 vs 67</b>
6	% of LAC who have had 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months	9	12	<b>12 vs 13</b>	<b>12 vs 9</b>	<b>12 vs 9</b>
7	% long term LAC in same placement for past 2 years	67	63	<b>63 vs 66</b>	<b>63 vs 67</b>	<b>63 vs 70</b>
8	% of 19-21 yr old care leavers living in suitable accommodation	95	96	<b>96 vs 97</b>	<b>96 vs 95</b>	<b>96 vs 88</b>
9	% of 19-21 yr old care leavers in education, employment or training	60	54.5	<b>54.5 vs 50.0</b>	<b>54.5 vs 60</b>	<b>54.5 vs 52</b>
10	% of social workers where caseload weighting is within desired points level *	70	69	<b>69 vs 82</b>	<b>69 vs 70</b>	Not applicable

**Appendix B - Education & Skills benchmarking against national averages / previous years \*** - Note: There have been no comparable updates for achievement outcomes since 2019, the next update being due in the autumn, so those KPIs are not reported here.

	Measure	Current Target	Current Performance Jun 2022	Direction of Travel vs 2018/19	Direction of Travel vs June 21	Current Performance Jun 2022 vs target	Comparison with national average
1	% children taking up the Statutory entitlement to early education for all eligible 2 year olds	80	93	93 vs 90	93 vs 78	93 vs 80	93 vs 62
2	% getting their first choice of primary school	95	97.3	97.3 vs 98.2	97.3 vs 98.1	97.3 vs 95	97.3 vs 92.2
3	% of pupils in primary schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding	89	Annual update due 9/22	87.4 vs 84.9	87.4 vs 86.7	87.4 vs 89.0	87.4 vs 89
7	Number of permanent exclusions from primary schools in academic year *	0	1	1 vs 5	1 vs 0	1 vs 0	Not Applicable
10	% getting their first choice of secondary school	95	97.2	97.2 vs 98.4	97.2 vs 97.6	97.2 vs 95.0	97.2 vs 83.3
11	Number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools in academic year *	84	95	95 vs 82	95 vs 38	95 vs 84	Not Applicable
12	% permanently excluded pupils receiving full-time education by 6th day following exclusion *	95	85.3	85.3 vs 77.9	85.3 vs 97.6	85.3 vs 95.0	Not Applicable
13	% of 16-17 year olds NEET and Not Known	5.3	4.9	4.9 vs 4.6	4.9 vs 4.9	4.9 vs 5.3	4.9 vs 4.8
14	% of pupils in secondary schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding	75	Annual update due 9/22	72.7 vs 65.9	72.7 vs 66.6	72.7 vs 75	72.7 vs 82
15	% of new Education Health and Care Plans successfully completed within statutory 20 week time scale (mthly avg to date in 2022)	70	79	79 vs 90	79 vs 100	79 vs 70	79 vs 58
16	% of Schools taking effective actions following a less than good Ofsted judgement	100	100	N.A.	N.A.	100 vs 100	Not Applicable



## Northumberland County Council

### **CABINET**

**Date: 13 September 2022**

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#### **The Outcomes of Consultation on Proposals for the Coquet Partnership**

Report of the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services - Audrey Kingham

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

Report prepared by: Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources

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#### **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out the analysis of feedback from consultation on proposals for schools in the Coquet Partnership to reorganise to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education. It also sets out an analysis of the feedback on the proposal to provide additional specialist SEND places to meet the growing need for places for children and young people diagnosed with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) within the Coquet Partnership area.

Cabinet approved consultation in the light of both the feedback received from the Governing Bodies in the Coquet Partnership and the proposed investment of £25.5m in school buildings in the partnership. Cabinet is now asked to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out proposals to reorganise schools (excluding NCEA Warkworth Primary which is already a primary school) in the Coquet Partnership within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, and to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal to increase the number of pupils at Barndale House Special School through the expansion of the school onto an additional site in Amble.

If the Statutory Proposals are approved for publication, Cabinet would need to make a final decision on the proposals within two months of the end of the representation period.

#### **Recommendations**

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

- a) Note the feedback from the informal (non-statutory Consultation).

- b) Note that consultation that took place between 11 May and 29 June, summarised at paras. 18 to 26 of this report.
- c) Decide in the light of this report and any recommendations arising from the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee whether to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out the intention of the Council to implement the proposals as follows:
- Extend the age range of Amble First School from an age 4-9 first school to an age 4-11 primary school and relocate the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;
  - Extend the age range of Amble Links First School from an age 2-9 first school to an age 2-11 primary school and expand the school in accordance with table 5 of the report building with effect from 1 September 2024;
  - Extend the age range of Broomhill First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school and expand the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;
  - Extend the age range of Red Row First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-11 primary school and expand the school building with effect from 1 September 2024;
  - Reduce the age range of James Calvert Spence College from an age 9-18 school to an age 11-18 secondary school with effect from 1 September 2025;
- d) Decide in the light of this report and any recommendations arising from the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee whether to permit the publication of a Statutory Proposal setting out the intention of the Council to increase the number of pupil places at Barndale House Special School by 50 places for children and young people diagnosed with special educational needs, primarily those with ASD, SEMH, Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) through the addition of a satellite site in the current South Avenue site of JCSC. Cabinet should note that this is a standalone proposal and is not dependent on the outcome of the decision in relation to the proposals for the first schools and JCSC set out at recommendation c).
- e) Note that Cabinet has previously approved capital investment in the Medium Term Plan to replace/refurbish the buildings of JCSC on its current site. Cabinet is therefore asked to note the preferred building solutions and the associated indicative capital costs of the proposals set out in recommendations c) to f) set out in para. 55 of this report and note that the Medium Term Plan would need to be increased by £11.1m to accommodate these capital costs as detailed in para. 55 of this report. Also, to note £2m of the additional funding required from MTFP will be achieved by reducing the budget for Astley as detailed in para. 55 of this report.
- f) Note that the outcomes of the publication of the Statutory Proposals would be brought back to Cabinet within 2 months of the date of their publication for a final decision.

## **Link to Corporate Plan**

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

## **Key Issues**

1. On 10 May 2022, at the request of schools in the Coquet Partnership Cabinet approved the initiation of informal (pre-statutory) consultation on proposals to change the organisation of schools in the Amble Partnership from the current first and middle/high structure, to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure.
2. The background and rationale for the proposal are set out fully in the Report of Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 10 May 2022 provided in the Background Papers to this report.
3. A proposal to increase pupil places at Barndale House Special School through the creation of a satellite school within the Coquet Partnership area was also included in this consultation. The Council has a strategic aim of working towards the provision of sufficient specialist places within Northumberland so that relevant children and young people are able to have their needs met as close to their local communities as possible.
4. Six weeks of consultation (excluding school holidays) began on 11 May and concluded at midnight on 29 June 2022. The method and format used to carry out consultation is set out at paras. 18 to 26, while the feedback and analysis is summarised in paras. 27 to 45.
5. In the light of the educational rationale from schools and Governing Bodies, and the feedback received from consultation, Cabinet is recommended to approve the publication of the statutory proposals both in relation to the reorganisation of the mainstream schools in Coquet Partnership and the increase in pupil numbers at Barndale House Special School. The implications of these recommendations are set out in paras. 11 – 17 of this report.

## **Background Information**

6. In 2016, Cabinet approved the allocation of funding towards replacement or refurbishment of JCSC buildings, while in 2022 the capital allocation in the Medium term Plan was increased to £25.5m towards the improvement of school buildings in the Coquet partnership as a whole.
7. Before such capital investment is made in school buildings in the Coquet Partnership, officers recommended that Cabinet receive assurance that it would be spent on an organisational school structure that supports viable and sustainable schools at all phases of education in the area, with a view to encouraging increased numbers of parents to enroll their children in schools at all phases of the education system in the area. This is in line with the Council's objectives to provide good local education for all children and young people in the county.
8. In light of para. 6, Council Officers met with the headteachers and Chairs of Governors in the Coquet Partnership in January to March 2022 at full partnership level and as individual schools, to determine their views on the current and preferred

structure of schools in the partnership. A summary of feedback from these meetings was set out in the Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services Report, 10 May 2022. Overall, the feedback received from the majority of schools clearly pointed to the desire to carry out a consultation on proposals for schools to be organised within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure.

9. There is currently no specialist provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) within the Coquet Partnership. Currently, there are 60 pupils from Reception to Year 11 who have to travel daily to specialist provision outside of their local area and some out of county for their education. In particular, the Council's data indicates there is a growing need for additional specialist provision for children and young people with Autism (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary SEN need right across the county. This growing trend also applies to the Coquet Partnership - forecasts for the number of children requiring places in specialist provision with ASD and SEMH as a primary need are provided in Table 1 and Table 2:



**Table 1 - Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need requiring specialist provision and living in Coquet Partnership**

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2022	1	2	4	13	3	9	3	8	4	4	7	7
2023	1	1	2	9	12	5	12	3	6	5	4	8
2024	1	1	2	5	9	22	7	15	3	9	6	4
2025	1	1	2	3	5	16	29	9	12	4	9	6
2026	1	1	2	4	3	8	21	38	7	17	4	10
2027	1	1	2	4	4	6	11	27	31	10	17	4
2028	1	1	2	4	4	6	7	14	22	41	10	19
2029	1	1	2	4	4	6	8	10	12	30	43	11

Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group

**Table 2 - Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need requiring specialist and living in Coquet Partnership**

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2022	3	5	8	10	7	8	8	9	9	8	5	7
2023	3	7	8	8	14	6	7	10	10	8	8	5
2024	3	8	11	9	11	11	5	8	10	8	9	8
2025	3	8	12	11	11	9	11	6	9	9	9	8
2026	3	8	12	13	15	10	9	12	6	7	9	8
2027	3	7	12	13	17	13	9	10	13	5	8	9
2028	3	7	11	13	17	14	12	10	11	11	6	7
2029	3	7	12	11	17	14	13	14	11	9	12	6

Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group

- The discussions on the structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership have therefore presented the opportunity to discuss the predicted growing demand for special educational needs in the area with mainstream schools and Barndale House Special School in order to form a 'joined-up' approach to the education of all children and young people living in this area.

### Implications for individual schools

- Amble First School – The Governing Body of the school wish to extend the age range of the first school to become a primary school within a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure within the partnership. Pupils on roll at the school in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 would be retained on roll at the school in September 2024 as Year 5, and as Year 6 in September 2025. In order for the school to extend its age range, the school would need to relocate to a different site, as its current site is not suitable for expansion. The proposed site under the 2-tier (primary/secondary) proposal is the current site of JCSC at Acklington Road, and it is proposed that this site would be shared with the proposed satellite site of Barndale House Special School (see paras. 17 and 55).

12. Amble Links First School - The Governing Body of the school wish to extend the age range of the first school to become a primary school within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure within the partnership. Pupils on roll at the school in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 would be retained on roll at the school in September 2024 as Year 5, and as Year 6 in September 2025. The school building would need to be expanded to accommodate the additional 2 year groups (see para. 55).
13. Broomhill First School - The Governing Body of the school wish to extend the age range of the first school to become a primary school within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure within the partnership. Pupils on roll at the school in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 would be retained on roll at the school in September 2024 as Year 5, and as Year 6 in September 2025. The school building would need to be expanded to accommodate the additional 2 year groups (see para. 55).
14. Grange View CE First School - The Governing Body of the school wish to extend the age range of the first school to become a primary school within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure within the partnership. Pupils on roll at the school in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 would be retained on roll at the school in September 2024 as Year 5, and as Year 6 in September 2025. The school building would need to be expanded to accommodate the additional 2 year groups (see para. 55).
15. Red Row First School - The Governing Body of the school wish to extend the age range of the first school to become a primary school within a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure within the partnership. Pupils on roll at the school in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 would be retained on roll at the school in September 2024 as Year 5, and as Year 6 in September 2025. The school building would need to be expanded to accommodate the additional 2 year groups (see para. 55).
16. James Calvert Spence College (JCSC) – While the Governing Body of the school supports the current system of organisation in the partnership, they have confirmed their commitment to work hard to make whichever school structure is in place a success. Under a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure, the school would not receive a Year 5 group from September 2024 and from September 2025 would become an age 11-18 school, with transition into Year 7 only from that date onwards. Students who would be in Year 5 at JCSC in August 2024 would transfer as Year 6 to dedicated accommodation at the Acklington Road site in September 2024 (see para. 49). Funding for the replacement/refurbishment of the JCSC buildings is already approved by Cabinet and the proposed building solution is set out at para. 55.
17. Barndale House Special School - The Governing Body of the school recognises the need to increase specialist provision in the North of Northumberland and supports the proposal to increase numbers at the school through the creation of a satellite school located at the current Acklington Road site. Under the current structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership, the Barndale satellite school would share the site with JCSC, while under the proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary) proposal, Barndale would share the site with Amble Primary School (as it would become).

## The Consultation Process

18. Informal (pre-statutory) consultation began on a proposal for a 2-tier model of school organisation in the Coquet Partnership on 11 May and closed on 29 June 2022 in line with DfE Guidance. A consultation register of relevant stakeholders was drawn up and is included at Appendix 2 of this report.
19. A consultation document was developed, including a questionnaire, setting out the background, rationale (including data and information on structures and standards in schools in the partnership) and the implications of the proposal. The document also set out the rationale for the increase of additional places at Barndale House Special School with a view to creating a satellite provision within the Coquet Partnership area.
20. The consultation document was circulated directly to parents, staff, Governors and other stakeholders in the Consultation Register via an electronic link. The link to the document was also published on the Council's website, on Twitter and Facebook and a notice highlighting the consultation displayed in the local library in Amble.
21. In addition, a dedicated consultation 'padlet' was set up to hold the consultation document, frequently asked questions and other relevant information for stakeholders.
22. Council officers held meetings with the Governing Body and staff group at each of the Coquet Partnership schools impacted by the proposals during the 6 week consultation period. A meeting was also held with the Governing Body of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary although this school would not be directly impacted by the reorganisation proposals.
23. Officers met with the Governing Body of Barndale House Special School to gauge their views specifically on the proposed increase in pupil numbers and satellite site, as this proposal is not directly linked with the reorganisation of schools and could be implemented within the current structure or within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure in order to address the growing number of children and young people being diagnosed with ASD and SEMH within the Coquet Partnership area.
24. Summaries of these meetings are provided at para. 44 of this report.
25. A public event was held in Amble Masonic Hall on Saturday, 11 June between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Council Officers and at least one representative from each school were on hand throughout the day to assist with any queries or provide additional information to stakeholders. Laptops were also made available to stakeholders wishing to complete a consultation questionnaire on the day. The event was attended by 15 parents and members of the community; the Council also provided transport to and from the event from the villages of Broomhill, Red Row, Widdrington and Widdrington Station, but this transport was not taken up by any parents or members of the community living in those areas on the day.
26. Should Cabinet approve the publication of the statutory proposals set out under the Recommendations, there would be a four-week period of statutory consultation during which time all interested parties would be able to submit comments either for or against the proposals. The statutory proposals would be published on 15 September, closing on 13 October 2022.

## Feedback from Consultation

27. This section of the report summaries the feedback from consultation on the proposals for the reorganisation of schools in the Coquet Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, and on the proposal to create specialist provision within the area through the increase of pupil places at Barndale House Special School via the creation of a satellite site in Amble.

Responses from Governing Bodies and staff were as follows (full responses are included in the Background Papers to this report):

28. Amble First School

The Governing Body believes that of the two options outlined Model B is by far the most preferable. There has been a desire from the first schools for such a change for a number of years and reassurances have been given that no schools will be closed.

Splitting a key stage is problematic, not just in terms of educational achievement but the children will have studied different curriculum topics leading to repetition for some.

If Model B is adopted, we would expect to continue developing good working relationships between all the schools and ensure a smooth transmission from primary to secondary.

An extract from their response states:

*“Our hope and desire is that Amble First could move to the middle school site to allow expansion; this decision is a ‘no-brainer’.*

*Primary educators are the experts at delivering the primary curriculum and the change to a two-tier system fits in well with key stages. These children need to be supported and developed to reach their potential, and we believe that could be best achieved by developing primary schools across the partnership.”*

Staff at Amble First School are keen for the schools to change to a two-tier system as the children would benefit academically, socially and emotionally from spending a further two years in a primary setting.

The staff are aware that the current key stage 2 results in the partnership are not as good as they should be. They believe that by allowing the children to stay in primary education it would help to improve results at key stage 2 as the curriculum could be organised more effectively, ensuring clear progression of knowledge and skills. The middle school currently faces the challenge of designing a curriculum for Years 5 and 6 who have all covered different topics in their first schools which leads to repetition for some pupils and a lack of coverage for others. Converting to a primary school would enable all children to receive the full curriculum coverage across key stage 2.

The school recognised that some children are ready for transition and others, particularly SEND children, find transition difficult. Those children would benefit from the stability of a further two years in the same class with familiar school staff. By

reducing the number of transitions, they could keep the same high level of support in place for longer.

An extract from their response states:

*“We are aware that any change to primary would involve a move for us. This is something that we would welcome. We are increasingly aware of the age of our building and the money that we have to spend on repairs and maintenance. We are also aware of the views of parents who feel that we do not have as much to offer as other schools in the area due to not having a school field.*

*A move to a new building would hopefully provide us with some more space so that we could support our children better. We are concerned that if we do not move to new premises, prospective parents will look to other schools with better facilities, and we may see a further decline in numbers.”*

## 29. Amble Links First School

The Governing Body has met on several occasions to discuss the proposal and is in agreement with Model B. A number of reasons were cited including:

- improved key stage 2 outcomes,
- fitting in with national curriculum key stages and other areas in the county/country
- enabling children to move at a point when they are more emotionally resilient to do so
- contributes to keeping children in the Coquet partnership

They did, however, have a few concerns regarding updating first schools to take year 5 and 6 pupils. These concerns included:

- the hope that the work would be done to the highest standard and that no one school would appear to be better equipped/resourced
- work would be carried out with a long-term view and not in a temporary way
- that all facilities are fit for purpose

The provision of a SEND facility is welcomed, but the governors felt it would be better if this could be a purpose-built school ensuring longevity.

An extract from their response states:

*“Children complete key stage 2 on one site and are not uprooted in the middle, which can result in a fall in attainment. This continuity would help to address the need to improve key stage 2 outcomes.”*

From the available options the majority of staff at Amble Links First School preference was for Model B. Some of the reasons cited for this decision included:

- Children are too young to move up and, due to their age, are quite vulnerable – many are not yet mature enough to be given the levels of independence/freedom that they get at middle school.

- Many children in Year 4 are concerned about bullying as they move to middle school.
- Staff are committed to building on their current successful work in designing the curriculum and taking this into upper key stage 2. There would be more consistency in curriculum delivery across key stage 2 – this is something that has not worked well when the key stage has been split and there has been lack of cohesion between schools.
- Fewer and better time of transition points will benefit children’s learning and well-being – two tier would eliminate the splitting of key stage 2 which is disruptive.
- SEND – Staff would be keen to have additional provision in the local area, so fewer children are transported out of the area. This would help those children to feel more a part of the community and to keep the length of the school day shorter.

The staff also raised some concerns and questions including:

- Concerns raised that if other Amble Schools get rebuilds or refurbishments, would other schools get additional investment too? Amble Links could be left to be the only school in Amble that doesn't appear to be 'shiny and new' - being seen as the second-rate school in Amble.
- If we remain as a three tier system, what will happen to the money earmarked for the partnership? Will it still be invested in schools?
- SATS are, of course, a concern. Staff would require additional training and support both for teaching and leading subjects in upper KS2.

### 30. Broomhill First School

The Governing Body believes that a change to primary/secondary would bring the partnership in line with the majority of schools in England. Reorganisation will remove the phase transfer in the middle of a key stage allowing schools to take full responsibility and accountability for full key stages. It would provide stability, consistency and continuity for pupils throughout their primary/secondary years, in-line with the National Curriculum and end of key stage assessments.

An extract from their response states:

*“As a Governing Body, we believe that each first school is best suited to continue the education of the children in their schools to the end of key stage 2; staff know the children well and can build on their understanding of the unique needs of each pupil, strong relationships have been developed with families and care givers to support their child’s education and emotional well-being.”*

### 31. Grange View CE VC First School

The Governing Body want to offer the best possible education for all pupils whilst ensuring the long-term viability of the schools in the partnership and as such support the move to Model B.

We believe staff in first schools are best place to continue the educational journey of the children. In addition, accountability for key stage 2 assessments lies with one

establishment and children's prior knowledge can be built on accurately avoiding repetition that can happen at middle schools.

Practicalities of arranging a smooth transition in the middle of a key stage has proven difficult for all schools involved and the time and effort this entails could be spent accelerating the progress of the pupils in their current settings.

It is essential to consider the long-term structure of the partnership for the investment to be spent effectively to best meet the educational and well-being needs of the children.

An extract from their response states:

*“The implementation of the primary/secondary system will provide stability, consistency and continuity for pupils throughout their primary and secondary years which is in line with the National Curriculum and key stage assessments.*

*As governors, we can assure you we have the commitment, drive and determination to make this proposal work.”*

### 32. Red Row First School

The Governing Body for Red Row First School confirm they are supportive of the proposed change to a two-tier system. They are keen for all children within Red Row, and the partnership, to receive the best education possible.

An extract from their response states:

*“The transition at key stage 2 has a huge impact on children and is often unsettling. We at Red Row are keen to maintain and progress our children to achieve the best they can. We thrive to nurture them to achieve the best and moving at 11 years of age will help us do this.”*

The staff at Red Row First School supported Model B for the following reasons:

- Better outcomes for children in the partnership
- Continuity of the Curriculum to tie in with National end points
- Continuity of provision throughout KS2

### 33. NCEA Warkworth C of E Primary School

The school is already a primary school within the partnership. Due to changes within the Alnwick Partnership, they felt it was important to seek primary status to enable children, if they wanted to, to transfer to Alnwick in year 7, whilst leaving a transition route open to James Calvert Spence College at either year 5 or year 7. With that experience the Governing Body supports Model B. They believe it would bring some conformity across both the Coquet and Alnwick Partnerships. The governors also support the provision of Special Education Needs within the Partnership which enhances the Model B proposals.

An extract from their response states:

*“... we believe that by ensuring that children stay within the partnership in their primary schools until year 6 and complete their SATs this will be beneficial to the partnership as a whole”.*

34. James Calvert Spence College

The Governing Body of James Calvert Spence College welcomes the proposed capital investment. They view the consultation as an opportunity to provide the community with the education structure most suited to the children both now and in the future to provide them with the very best start in life.

Whilst they are committed to the current structure of the school with pupils having access to fantastic facilities earlier in their education journey, coupled with unrivalled pastoral support they understand the need to consider the effectiveness and sustainability of an alternative model before the proposed capital investment proceeds.

The governors do have some operational concerns including financial implications and staffing protocol during any transition period.

Whatever the outcome of this consultation, James Calvert Spence College will work tirelessly to make either system a success.

An extract from their response states:

*“Our focus is to provide the best possible education for the children in our community, work for them and unite our partnership education system. We will support the decision made following the consultation and we will work as hard as it takes to make the future model work effectively, whatever that model might be.*

*We have a shared commitment with our colleagues across the Coquet Partnership to the best outcome for our children and young people and to the communities we all serve.”*

35. School Staff Across the Partnership

In addition, 12% of staff across the partnership responded to the online survey with 10% in favour of Model B and 2% unsure.

36. Barndale House School (in relation to proposed increase of places via a satellite school in Amble)

The Governing Body welcomes the local authority’s enthusiasm, support and confidence in us as a school. It is incredibly humbling that the Coquet partnership would want to work collaboratively with our provision. As a Governing Body we recognise what our role would be with this and the opportunities it could provide:

- A SEND hub that mainstream schools can use for CPD, intervention and outreach.
- Bringing professional services together on a single site.
- Children receiving support in their locality (stronger community links)



- Securing outcomes for SEND pupils through all Schools in Coquet partnership, and improved SEND provision in the north of Northumberland.
- Specialist support base for those pupils needing early intervention.

Whilst the proposal brings opportunities it also brings some challenges and as a Governing Body, we would want to ensure that:

- Barndale can provide an excellent quality of education over both sites in fit for purpose environments.
- The transitional phase is transparent and allows growth at an appropriate rate.
- Capacity is built to ensure effective strategic and operational leadership over both sites.
- Barndale can continue to make decisions regarding the admissions of places to ensure pupils needs can be met appropriately.
- Our pupils and parents are clear that the extended provision would not result in a move of pupils from their current peer group.
- There is sufficient capacity to build a specialist hub of services in both provisions to ensure that the locality can be supported.

An extract from their response states:

*“Our governors are a strong body of people who have a genuine interest and personal investment in young people with SEND (school leaders, parents, health professionals, community providers and mainstream colleagues) and as such feel our viewpoints represent the wider school community and advocate for children and young people with SEND.”*

## **Responses and Evidence Collated from Other Sources**

### **37. Response from the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)**

As always, The Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB) wishes to ensure that the best local solutions are carefully looked at for the entire local community, not just the church schools and that all schools work effectively together for the benefit of all children within that community.

The Board have considered the wider information presented in the consultation document and following discussion with their schools in the partnership, are supportive of Model B and the proposal to move to a full primary/secondary structure across the partnership.

In relation to the growing numbers of children in need of specialist SEN provision, and the fact that several children across the partnership are required to travel lengthy distances to access specialist provision, the Board is supportive of the proposal to develop local specialist provision within the partnership and for it to be located within the current James Calvert Spence College building.

An extract from their response states:

*“The NDEB hopes that the outcome of the current consultation will provide a clear direction for the future of the schools going forwards, ensuring the best educational interests of all of the children across the Coquet partnership can be met.”*

38. Response from the Diocese of Hexham of Newcastle

The Diocese supported Model B. The reasons cited in support of model B included the removal of a split key stage; the curriculum being in line with national curriculum phases, improved provision and accountability and better transition between key stages and schools.

An extract from their response states:

*“Single system to facilitate shared working and sharing of good practice including moderation and training.”*

39. Pupils

Staff in Amble Links First, Broomhill First and Grange View First Schools initiated discussions with the pupils on the proposals for the Coquet partnership. Their comments are noted below:

*In Support of Model A*

- I'd like to make new friends at middle school and see friends from other schools.
- Meet new teachers.
- More clubs.
- It might have better things.

*In Support of Model B*

- We would get more time to spend with our younger brothers or sisters.
- Staying here means you can spend longer being in the same class with your friends and you won't leave them behind.
- I'm angry that it is not happening now, I want to stay here at this school.
- Familiar with this school and won't be scared.

In addition, the Council developed a separate questionnaire for students at James Calvert Spence College. Only four responses to the questionnaire were received from students and all were in favour of Model A.

Main reasons were:

- You need to learn to adapt to different environments this helps progress this further.
- It gets students more used to the idea of changing workplaces this would better prepare them for the reality of getting/changing jobs.

Full responses from pupils and students are available in the Background Papers to this report.

40. Summary of feedback from County Councillors with wards in Coquet Partnership area

No responses were received from Councillors with wards in the Coquet partnership.

41. Summary of feedback from Town and Parish Councils in the Coquet Partnership area

*Amble Town Council* - The Town Council would support the community's choice.

An extract from their response states:

*"... would urge that NCC retain as many existing staff as possible should changes be made."*

**Individual responses including parents, grandparents and members of the community**

42. In total 3029 consultees were sent a link to the informal consultation document and questionnaire directly and 125 responses were received to the consultation.

The survey asked which structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership would be the best option for providing improved outcomes for all children and young people in the area and for securing a sustainable and viable education for this and future generations? 92% of the respondents thought that Model B, a primary/secondary model, would provide improved outcomes and be a sustainable and viable option.

3% thought that Model A, the current structure, would provide improved outcomes and less than 5% responded that they didn't know which model would provide improvements.

From the responses received around 50% were from parents/carers of pupils currently attending schools within the partnership, 25% from staff and governing bodies and the remainder from other interested stakeholders.

Main reasons given in support for "Model A" were:

- Consultees believed that the three-tier structure worked for themselves and plenty of generations before and after.
- Didn't see the issue with key stage 2 being across different schools.
- It would take significant investment to increase the capacity of the first schools and it wouldn't be financially viable for first schools to have science labs, cookery rooms, design technology/IT rooms etc. all of which children should be doing at age 9.
- Amble First School isn't big enough to accommodate another two school years on its current grounds.

Main reasons given in support for "Model B" were:

- This model would allow pupils to complete Key Stage 2 in one school rather than having to change school midway through the key stage at a crucial time in their development.

- Accountability for Key stage 2 results not in question if children remain in primary school.
- Implementation of a primary/secondary model would provide consistency and continuity for pupils which is in line with the national curriculum and key stage assessments.
- Children would benefit from transfer at the end of year 6 rather than year 4 as they would be more mature to cope with the changes and there would also be fewer transitions for the children to make during their education.
- Children would be older and more independent by Year 6 for travelling to school on their own.
- Would be consistent with the rest of the County and would bring the North East up to date with the rest of the Country.

Main reasons given in support for “Don’t Know” were:

- Neither model addressed the real issue which is the continued low outcomes at the end of key stage 2. Feel that until this is known there is little point in taking action.
- Both models have their advantages and disadvantages. Would be happy with either outcome.
- The friendships developed through meeting new friends can have a massive influence on well-being and mental health and can help a child grow in confidence.

The survey also asked consultees if Model B (primary/secondary) was implemented was the proposal to locate a satellite school, run by Barndale Special School, for children and young people with special educational needs on a shared site with Amble First School a good solution for improving SEND provision in the area. 82% of the consultees thought that this was a good solution.

However, if Model A (current structure) remained in place 70% of consultees thought the proposal to locate a satellite school, run by Barndale Special School, on a shared site with a school in the partnership was a good solution for improving the SEND provision in the area.

Main reasons given by consultees were:

- Would enable this group of pupils to be educated closer to and within their home communities as well as providing expertise from the Special School to the partnership
- Allow for a smoother transition for those children with additional needs.
- Any extra provision has got to be a bonus for the area
- Important to keep children with special needs close to home. If we can avoid transporting our most vulnerable children across the county, then I believe we should.
- Children would not have to travel as far, be less disruptive and would save money.
- This would be a marvellous addition to the development and investment in the Coquet Partnership and would hopefully result in cost savings over time.

## Summary of Feedback received via meetings at schools

43. Council Officers had meetings with the Governing Body and staff body of Red Row, Grange View CE, Amble First, Amble Links, Broomhill First Schools and JCSC and with the Governing Body of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary to consider the proposal to reorganise the partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure during the informal consultation period; union representatives were present at the meetings held with staff groups. Officers also met with the Governing Body of Barndale House Special School to discuss the proposed increase in pupil numbers via a satellite school in Amble. Summaries of these meetings are set out below:

### 44. Amble First School, 16 May 2022

#### a. Staff Meeting

- Twelve members of staff attended the meeting.
- Questions were asked about the SEND provision, i.e., what would the age be and how divided would the site be.

#### b. Governing Body Meeting

- There were seven governors present.
- Discussed the costs of refurbishment and whether there was any flexibility regarding the budget and who bears the cost of the refurbishment.
- Staffing protocol was discussed, and it was noted that re-organisations were a difficult time for staff. Governors hoped support would be available.

### Red Row First School, 18 May 2022

#### a. Staff Meeting

- Eight members of staff attended the meeting.
- There was discussion around two-year old provision and whether it was deemed adequate within the partnership.
- Questioned whether it would be possible to come to a decision sooner to aid earlier implementation of any proposal.
- Staff felt that the perception in the community would be that it was already a “done deal”, particularly with what happened at Druridge Bay.

#### b. Governing Body Meeting

- There were six governors present.
- Funding for the proposals was discussed and it was asked if the Edwin Street site was sold whether the money would be re-invested into the partnership.
- Wrap-around provision was raised and whether there was any consideration to provide this as part of the consultation.
- Discussed if Model B was approved when would it be implemented.

### Amble Links First School, 23 May 2022

#### a. Staff Meeting

- There were 19 members of staff in attendance at the meeting.
- The budget allocated to the partnership was raised and it was queried whether it would be sufficient for the proposals.

- Discussed the forthcoming public event and whether there would be a meeting, in the same format as these meetings, for parents.
  - Staffing issues and the staffing protocol was discussed. A staff member asked whether there would be opportunities for redundancy.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- Nine members of the governing body attended the meeting.
  - Noted that under Model B building works would be required at a number of schools – would there be sufficient funding available to convert all the first schools into primary schools. Would there be any possibility that the proposals won't go ahead.
  - Discussed the SEND satellite provision and queried how big it would be.

#### Grange View First School, 24 May 2022

- a. Staff Meeting
- Thirteen members of staff attended the meeting.
  - Staffing implications were raised, particularly if Model B was implemented and the staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- There were eight governors present.
  - Discussed if Model B was implemented what the proposals would be around converting the first schools into primary schools.
  - Governors asked why Model B couldn't be implemented sooner.
  - Staffing issues raised and objectives of the staffing protocol discussed.

#### Broomhill First School, 25 May 2022

- a. Staff Meeting
- There were seven members of staff present.
  - Discussed implications of the proposals, particularly if community didn't support the proposal but the schools did.
  - There was discussion around potential building work and what the implications could be.
  - Staffing issues were raised, and the staffing protocol was discussed.
- b. Governing Body Meeting
- Five governors were present.
  - Discussed implications around buildings, capacity and what works would be needed to convert to a primary school.
  - Talked about the public event taking place on 16<sup>th</sup> June and what the format would be and expectation from the school.
  - Governors concerned at what was being reported, incorrectly, on social media by some parties and whether the Council has any influence.
  - Raised staffing implications and governors expressed concern that they would have no input as it would be delegated to the headteacher through the staffing protocol.
  - The lack of early years provision in the area was raised and it was queried whether any work had been done into the reasons why 400 children leave the catchment for their education.

James Calvert Spence College, 26 May 2022

a. Staff Meeting

- Twenty members of staff attended the meeting.
- There was discussion and questions regarding building works in relation to the South Avenue site, the high school site and whether it was definite that there would be a new build for the high school.
- Questions were asked if there were any plans for the Edwin Street site or the former Druridge Bay land.

b. Governing Body Meeting

- The meeting was attended by eight governors.
- Standards in the partnership was discussed and the governors were disappointed that the Cabinet report gave little recognition of the progress made at James Calvert Spence College and insisted that James Calvert Spence is a good school.
- Had Section 106 applications been considered as they could provide some opportunities for funding.
- One governor questioned the available options in the survey and stated that the questions were too wordy.

Barndale House School, 6 June 2022

a. Governing Body Meeting

- Seven governors were present
- Discussed the forecasted numbers in relation to pupils with special education needs and the proposals for the satellite provision.
- Implication for staff was raise and the staffing protocol was outlined.

NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School, 7 June 2022

a. Governing Body Meeting

- Six governors were in attendance, and they thanked the local authority for providing an update on the proposals for the partnership.
- For consistency across the partnership the Governing Body would be supportive of Model B as consistency in education provision is better for parents.
- Converting to become a primary school had been successful for Warkworth CE Primary and they believe it would be for the other schools in the partnership.

45. Alternative Proposals received during consultation

There was one alternative model received during consultation.

**Alternative Model Theme A**

The change to a primary/secondary model needs to take place sooner than the proposed date - it needs to impact as many children and year groups as it can.

Commentary

It is understandable that some parents of children in specific year groups have expressed a desire to implement a change to the structure of schools in the Coquet

Partnership on a faster timeline than the proposed reorganisation date of 1 September 2024.

However, there are some key reasons why it has been decided that it would be in the best interests of the majority of the children and young people educated in schools in the partnership to reorganise in September 2024;

- it is important for the continuity of education for the majority of pupils that that as many current staff working in the partnership. In order to achieve this, schools must redesign their staffing structures, consult on them, and appoint staff to posts that will start in September 2024. This would necessarily take some months to do but would provide the staff currently employed in schools in the partnership with certainty and hopefully make them less likely to seek employment elsewhere.
- All of the first schools in the partnership would require building works to make them suitable to become primary schools. Providing a longer lead in time to the reorganisation would provide greater certainty that these works would be completed on time for the change and would be less likely to impinge on schools during term time.

## **Commentary on Consultation Feedback and Conclusion**

### **46. Proposal for reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure**

All first schools in the Coquet Partnership are supportive of the proposed reorganisation to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure. The key themes around their educational rationale were:

- The first schools have expressed a desire for change in the school structure for a number of years;
- First schools are well placed to deliver the primary curriculum to the end of KS2 as primary specialists;
- The 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure matches the National Curriculum and is in line with the majority of the schools nationally;
- Having fewer transitions will benefit children with SEND especially.
- Schools have accountability for whole key stages in the 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure.

In their responses, all Governing Bodies in the partnership have shown commitment to making a change to a new structure work if it is approved for the benefit of the children and young people in the Coquet Area, including the Governing Body of JCSC although they remain supportive of the current structure. The staff groups who responded have all indicated their support for the proposed reorganisation, largely for the same educational reasons.

While the response from parents and the general public was relatively low, responses were overwhelmingly in favour of the move to 2-tier (primary/secondary, with 92% supporting the proposal – of these consultees, 50% were parents/carers and 25% were schools and school staff. Some parents highlighted in particular that children would be better prepared to journey to school independently at age 11 than at age 9.



Given the educational rationale presented by the majority of the Governing Bodies in the partnership, Cabinet is recommended to approve the publication of the statutory proposal setting out proposals to reorganised schools in the Coquet Partnership (outwith NCEA Warkworth as it is already a primary) to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure of organisation with effect from 1 September 2024.

The proposal to extend the age range of Grange View CE First School from an age 3-9 first school to an age 3-9 primary school and to enlarge the school building was also included within the informal (non-statutory) consultation. However, this school is a voluntary Controlled school and under school organisation regulations the Council is permitted to approve prescribed alterations to voluntary schools by following the non-statutory process, providing the usual principles of law are adhered to, which are:

- Act rationally;
- Take into account all relevant and no irrelevant considerations; and
- Follow a fair procedure

As consultation on the proposal for Grange View CE First School has taken place in conjunction with the proposals for the other relevant schools in the partnership, it is recommended that the final decision on whether to extend the age range of this school is made at the same time as the other schools which are subject to the Statutory Proposal.

Note that while NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School forms part of the Coquet Partnership, as it is already a primary school it formed no part of the proposals at informal (pre-statutory) consultation, although the school and parents of pupils attending were invited to respond

#### 47. Proposal for the increase in pupil numbers at Barndale House Special school through the creation of a satellite site in Amble

Of the responses received to consultation in relation to the proposal to create a satellite site of Barndale House in Amble, 82% were in favour of the proposal under a 2-tier system and 70% in favour under the current system.

With 60 young people with SEND in the partnership leaving their home communities daily to attend provision in other partnerships or out of county and data indicating that the need for specialist places is growing in this area and across the county, it appears there is agreement that this proposal would be welcomed by the Coquet area community.

Cabinet it therefore recommended to approve the publication of a statutory proposal to increase places at Barndale House Special School through the creation of a satellite school at the current JCSC building in Amble.

### **Implications of the Proposal for reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure**

#### 48. Proposed model

Table 3 shows the current structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership. In this structure, pupils leave their first school at the end of Year 4 and join JCSC as the feeder secondary for Year 5, (or another school according to parental choice).

**Table 3 – Current Structure of schools in Coquet Partnership**

School	Number on Roll in Jan 2022	Capacity (net number of children able to be educated in the school building)	Forms of Entry (size of classes in each year group)	Planned Admission Number (PAN)
Amble First	108	150	1FE	30
Amble Links First	129	138	1FE	30
Broomhill First	66	75	0.5FE	15
Grange View CE First	83	150	1FE	30
Red Row First	83	120	1FE	29
*NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School	139	159	0.83FE	25
JCSC	735 inc sixth form	1058	4FE	120

\*NCEA Warkworth CE Primary has provision for pupils to the end of Year 6 but is shown in this model for completeness.

Table 4 shows the proposal model of organisation of schools in the Coquet Partnership under a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. In this structure, pupils would leave first school at the end of Year 6 and would join JCSC as the feeder secondary for Year 7 (or another school according to parental choice). The Planned Admission Number (PAN) of Red Row First School would also be changed from 29 to 30 as a tidying up exercise.

**Table 4 – Proposed 2-tier (primary/secondary structure of schools in Coquet Partnership**

School	Number on Roll in Jan 2022	Planned Capacity (net number of children able to be educated in the school building in Reception to Year 6)	Planned Forms of Entry (number of classes in each year group)	Planned Admission Number (PAN - number of children in each class)
Amble First	108 (150)	210	1FE	30
Amble Links First	129 (138)	210	1FE	30
Broomhill First	66 (75)	105	0.5FE	15
Grange View CE First	83 (150)	210	1FE	30
Red Row First	83 (120)	210	1FE	30
NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School	139	159	0.83FE	25
JCSC	735 inc sixth form	810	4FE	120

\*NCEA Warkworth CE Primary already has provision for pupils to the end of Year 6 but is shown in this model for completeness.

#### 49. Timeline for Implementation

##### *Amble, Amble Links, Broomhill and Grange View CE First Schools*

##### **1 September 2024**

- Pupils in Year 4 on 31 August 2024 in all the above first schools would be retained by their new primary schools as the new Year 5.

### **1 September 2025**

- Pupils in Year 5 on 31 August 2025 in all the above first schools would be retained by their new primary schools as the new Year 6.

### **1 September 2026**

- Pupils in Year 6 in these primary schools on 31 August 2026 would transfer as the new Year 7 to JCSC, or to another school providing education in those year groups according to parental preference.

## *JCSC*

### **5 June 2023**

- From 5 June 2023 (or as near as reasonably practicable), students in Years 5 and 6 located at the South Avenue site of JCSC (and students in Years 7 and 8 if located at South Avenue at that time) would relocate to the Acklington Road site into suitable accommodation.

### **1 September 2023**

- Students on roll at first schools on 31 August 2023 would transfer as usual into Year 5 at JCSC but would be located at the Acklington Road site.
- Students on roll in Years 5, 6 and 7 at JCSC on 31 August 2023 would transfer into Years 6,7 and 8 at the school and would remain located at the Acklington Road site.

### **1 September 2024**

- The school would not receive a Year 5 intake and would operate with Year 6 to Year 13 only.

### **1 September 2025**

- Students in Year 6 on 31 August 2025 in JCSC would transfer into Year 7.
- JCSC would have intakes into Year 7 only from this date onwards.

## 50. Implications for staff

Should approval be given for the schools in the Coquet Partnership to reorganise to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) structure, there would be implications for staff in all of the relevant schools. First schools becoming primaries would need to redesign their staffing structures to reflect the requirements of a primary school and it is expected that they would need additional staff for their new Year 5 and 6 classes. JCSC would also need to redesign its staffing structure if it is approved to become an age 11-18 secondary school as it would no longer require teaching provision for Years 5 and 6. It would be the intention of Council Officers to work with all schools in the partnership to develop a staffing protocol in order to manage the transition of staff through reorganisation with the aim of retaining as many of the existing staff within schools as possible. To this end, initial discussions with Governing Bodies of all schools impacted and with Trades Unions would be undertaken as soon as possible if the proposal is approved.

## 51. Catchment areas

There are no proposals to change any of the catchment areas of schools within the Coquet Partnership. Should reorganisation to the 2-tier structure be approved, the first schools becoming primary would become the catchment schools for pupils living in those areas up to the end of Year 6, while JCSC would be the catchment school for pupils living in the 'greater' Coquet catchment area from Year 7 onwards.

Also, to note that the proposal to extend the age range of Amble First School includes a proposal to relocate the school to the current South Avenue site of James Calvert Spence College (JCSC) in Amble as the school is not able to expand on its current site. As the distance between the two schools is less than 2 miles, and the school remains within its existing catchment area a statutory proposal is not required for this relocation.

#### 52. Special Educational Needs Provision

Apart from the proposed increase in pupil numbers at Barndale House Special School as set out in this report, current SEN provision at the first schools and JCSC would continue to be provided should reorganisation be approved. Reorganisation may benefit some pupils with SEN who would be able to remain at their primary school for an additional 2 years.

#### 53. Early Years Provision

While the extent and the quality of early years provision in the Coquet Partnership was considered as part of this consultation, officers in the Council's Early Years team confirmed that there is enough provision of sufficient quality currently in the partnership area and that any changes to current early years provision in schools have a destabilising effect.

#### 54. Transport

Eligibility for Home to School Transport in Northumberland is arranged in accordance with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. Should the proposal for reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system be approved, pupils remaining in their first schools as they become primary would have shorter distances to school in Years 5 and 6. This may result in a small saving to the Council's Home to School Transport budget.

#### 55. Buildings Implications

Building costs set out in Table 5 below are indicative and would be subject to further detailed work should the proposed to reorganise schools to a 2-tier structure be approved. Also, to note replacement mobile classroom works were already schedule at Amble First and Red Row. The estimated costs below include the replacement works in order to achieve better value through a larger tendering exercise should the reorganisation of schools goes ahead.

**Table 5 – Estimate of Building costs to first schools implement reorganisation**

<b>School</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Indicative cost</b>
Amble First School	Relocation to current JCSC South Avenue Site	£3.1m
Amble Links First School	Two classrooms, one group room and additional WC provision	£825k
Broomhill First School	One classroom, one group room, a Medical Inspection room and additional WC provision	£1,038
Red Row First School	Three classrooms (includes replaces of some existing accommodation), two group rooms and additional WC provision	£1,746
Grange View CE First School	One classroom, one group room, staff room and additional WC provision	£1,025
James Calvert Spence	New build Secondary school.	£22.8m
Barndale Off Site provision	Refurbished JCSC South Avenue site.	£5.6m
<b>Total</b>		<b>£36.134</b>

The table below sets out how the overall reorganisation would be funded if approval is given to implement the changes following the statutory process and Cabinets' final decision later in the year. The Funding below also includes increasing the value of contribution from MTFP by £2m which will be achieved by reducing the budget allocation for Astley and Whytrig new build project. This has been possible as the scope of the project was reduced when Cabinet decided not to support the closure of Seaton Sluice Middle and therefore the size of the building reduced to reflect the reduction in pupil numbers.

**Table 6 – Funding breakdown to deliver Capital improvements above.**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Value</b>
NCC Capital (MTEP)	£27.5m (inclusive of £2m Astley savings against budget)
SEND Capital Grant	£1.5m
Capital Maintenance Grant (SCIP)	£5.5m
Basic Need	£1.6m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£36.1m</b>

As stated, capital funding has already been allocated for the replacement/ refurbishment of the JCSC buildings and therefore this project would be the subject of a separate business case for approval by Cabinet, which would be provided to Cabinet with the outcomes of the statutory consultation towards However, the extend of this project will depend on whether Cabinet approves the proposed reorganisation to the 2-tier structure, in which case the replacement buildings at JCSC would need to accommodate Years 7 to 13 only.

56. Sport and Recreation

There would be no negative impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to become primaries under the proposed reorganisation to the 2-tier structure.

It is expected that the sport and recreation facilities at JCSC will be enhanced through the provision of the new buildings, including enhanced provision for the local community.

**Implications of the Proposal for the increase in pupil numbers at Barndale House Special school through the creation of a satellite site in Amble**

57. Proposed model

In light of the lack of specialist provision currently within the Coquet Partnership area and the growing number of children and young people being diagnosed with a primary need in ASD and SEMH across the county, including in this area, it is proposed that Barndale House Special School would increase its planned pupil numbers in order to operate a satellite site in Amble. Over time, this would enable pupils with SEND who live in the Coquet area to attend provision close to their home communities in line with the Council’s objectives.

It is proposed that the satellite site would be designated for pupils aged 4 to 16 with primary needs in ASD, SEMH, SLCN and MLD and would have capacity for 50 pupils. It is also proposed that this provision would grow in a phased and managed way and that no pupils living in the Coquet area who already attend specialist provision would be compelled to transfer to this provision.

In addition to the main objective of creating local specialist provision within the Coquet area, the Council also supports the objectives of the Governing Body of Barndale House Special School, as set out in their response to this consultation. As being:

- Creation of a SEND hub within the Coquet Partnership that mainstream schools can use for Continuous Professional Development, intervention and outreach.
- Bringing professional services together on a single site.
- Securing outcomes for SEND pupils through all schools in Coquet partnership, and improved SEND provision in the north of Northumberland.
- Specialist support base for those pupils needing early intervention.

#### 58. Timeline for Implementation

If approval is given to increase places at Barndale House via the proposed satellite site in Amble, it is proposed that this provision would open at the proposed site in September 2024.

#### 59. Implications for staff

Should Cabinet approve the increase in places for Barndale House, additional staff would be required to meet the needs of the additional students at the satellite site in Amble.

#### 60. Transport

Students attending special schools in Northumberland are subject to the same eligibility criteria for Home to School Transport as mainstream students. It is anticipated that the provision of local specialist provision within the Coquet Partnership area would reduce the need for many students with the relevant SEND primary needs to travel outside of their local area, and therefore this would have a positive impact on the Council's Home to School Transport budget.

#### 61. Building Implications

It is proposed that the new Barndale House satellite provision would be located on a shared site at the current JCSC South Avenue site, either with JCSC if the current organisation of schools in the partnership remains in place, or with Amble First School if reorganisation to a 2-tier structure is approved.

Initial work has provided an indicative cost as set out in para 55 of the report.

#### 62. Sport and Recreation

It is expected that pupils at the proposed satellite site of Barndale House in Amble would have suitable access to playing fields at the current JCSC South Avenue site.



## **IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT**

<b>Policy:</b>	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.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Capital investment of £25.5m has been allocated by the Council in the Medium-Term Plan. Part of the rationale for informal consultation is to provide assurance to Cabinet that investment would be made within a sustainable and viable school structure for the medium to long-term. A detailed Business Case for investment would be brought forward to Cabinet once the structure of schools has been decided.
<b>Legal</b>	Consultation carried out on proposals has complied with School Organisation guidance and regulations. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
<b>Procurement</b>	An outline business case (OBC) will be developed and submitted to cabinet with the outcomes of the statutory consultation which will also set on the procurement options and recommendations to deliver best value for the councils investment.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There may be some implications for staff in schools in the wider Coquet Partnership should reorganization to a Primary Secondary structure be approved for implementation by Cabinet at a later date. If the status quo remains in place, there may be some implications for JCSCS staff should the school move onto one site.
<b>Property</b>	Refer to 'Finance and value for money' above
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> X No <input type="checkbox"/>	Impact assessment is contained as Appendix 3 of this report
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A full project risk assessment will be presented as part of the OBC, following the statutory consultation.
<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 children and young people and their families in Northumberland
<b>Carbon Reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that these proposals would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	
<b>Wards</b>	Amble; Druridge Bay; Amble West and Warkworth.

## **Background Papers**

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 10 May 2022  
– Proposals for the Coquet Partnership

## Report Sign Off

	<b>Full name</b>
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Interim Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Joint Interim Executive Director of Children's Services	Audrey Kingham
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Lead member for Children Services	GRT

## Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultation About School Structures in the Coquet Partnership

Appendix 2 - Consultation Register

Appendix 3 - Equalities Impact Assessment

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Northumberland  
County Council

# CONSULTATION ABOUT SCHOOL STRUCTURES IN THE COQUET PARTNERSHIP



**11 MAY – 29 JUNE 2022**

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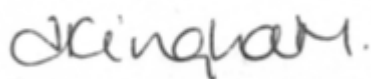
## Introduction

Northumberland County Council has committed £25.5m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Coquet Partnership. However, before carrying out this work to schools, the Council needs to know that it is investing in a school structure that will deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people, and that it is sustainable for the current and future generations to come.

Over the last few months, Council officers have been talking to Headteachers and school Chairs of Governors to gain their views on the current educational structure in Coquet. While there were some varying responses, the school leaders all agreed that it is now the right time for the views of everyone with an interest in education in Coquet to be captured. The schools have therefore asked the Council to carry out a wider consultation with parents, staff, governors, pupils and the wider public.

This consultation document sets out the key issues faced by schools in the partnership and asks for your views on whether the current structure or the proposed primary/secondary school structure would deliver a good and sustainable school system in the Coquet area. We are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could be a viable option for delivering these aims.

Whether you are a member of staff in a Coquet school, a parent of school-age children, a local resident, or anyone with an interest in education in the area, I hope that you will take this opportunity to submit your views and help to shape the future of schools in the Coquet Partnership.



Audrey Kingham  
Interim Executive Director of Children's Services  
Northumberland County Council

## BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION



### **Current structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership**

The Coquet Partnership currently has a mixed organisation of schools and academy, with 5 first schools, 1 primary academy and James Calvert Spence College (JCSC), which is an age 9-18 school.

The Coquet Partnership includes the following schools:

- Amble First – age 4-9
- Amble Links First– age 2-9
- Broomhill First – age 3-9
- Grange View CE First – age 3-9
- Red Row First – age 3-9
- NCEA Warkworth Church of England Primary (academy) – age 2-11
- James Calvert Spence College – age 9-18

Some schools also have provision for children from age 2 which are run separately from the school e.g. Amble First.

Children in the first schools leave at the end of Year 4 and transfer into Year 5 at JCSC. A school structure that includes a transfer at the end of Year 4 is in keeping with the 3-tier system that was prevalent across Northumberland, and which now remains in 5 of the 14 school partnerships in the county.

In 2016, the Governing Body of NCEA Warkworth Church of England Primary School decided to extend the age range of the school to become a primary with provision for children aged 2 to 11. Therefore, children leave this school at the end of Year 6 and transfer to either JCSC in Year 7 or more often, join a local secondary school (usually The Duchess High School in Alnwick if there are places available). Warkworth is therefore organised within the primary secondary structure and matches the structure of the National Curriculum Key Stages. As Warkworth is therefore already structured as a primary school, it does not form part of this consultation in relation to any proposals for change, but the views of staff, governors and parents of children attending the school in relation to changes to structure for other schools are welcomed as Warkworth does form part of the overall Coquet Partnership.

As JCSC was formed from the amalgamation of JCSC South Avenue (formerly named Amble Middle School) and JCSC Acklington Road, the school operates across a split site. Depending on the size of year groups in any given year, either Years 5 and 6 or Years 5, 6 and 7 are educated at the South Avenue building, while Years 7 or 8 onwards are educated at the Acklington Road site. In any event, at the of either Year 7 or 8, students transfer from South Avenue to the Acklington Road site.

The issue of which school structure would best serve the children and young people living in the Coquet area has been talked about among the local schools for a number of years, but consensus was never reached on a decision to consult on structure. However, with the difficulties caused by the COVID pandemic now being largely overcome, the Council is once again planning its investment programme in schools and it is necessary to ensure that such investment is made in a viable and sustainable school system in the Coquet Partnership.



# PART 1 – RATIONALE FOR THE CONSULTATION



## Key Stages within the National Curriculum

Table 1 shows the age of children within a particular Year Group and Key stage of the National Curriculum when organised within a primary/secondary system of schools.

**Table 1**

Age	Year Group	Key Stage	Phase
3-4	Nursery/pre-school	Early Years	PRIMARY
4-5	Reception class	Early Years	
5-6	Year 1	KS1	
6-7	Year 2	KS1 (Assessment)	
7-8	Year 3	KS2	
8-9	Year 4	KS2	
9-10	Year 5	KS2	
10-11	Year 6	KS2 (Assessment)	
<b>Phase Change to Secondary</b>			
11-12	Year 7	KS3	SECONDARY
12-13	Year 8	KS3	
13-14	Year 9	KS3	
14-15	Year 10	KS4	
15-16	Year 11	KS4 (GCSE's taken)	
16-17	Year 12	KS5	SIXTH FORM
17-18	Year 13	KS5 ('A' levels taken)	

Table 2 shows the age of children within a particular Year Group and Key stage of the National Curriculum as organised within the current school structure in the Coquet Partnership (note schools organised within the 3-tier system in Northumberland also have

a phase change at the end of Year 4 like JCSC, but also at the end of Year 8, unlike JCSC which has only one transition into the school at Year).

**Table 2**

Age	Year Group	Key Stage	Phase
3-4	Nursery/pre-school	Early Years	PRIMARY
4-5	Reception class	Early Years	
5-6	Year 1	KS1	
6-7	Year 2	KS1 (Assessment)	
7-8	Year 3	KS2	
8-9	Year 4	KS2	
<b>Phase Change to James Calvert Spence College</b>			
9-10	Year 5	KS2	PRIMARY
10-11	Year 6	KS2 (Assessment)	
11-12	Year 7	KS3	SECONDARY
12-13	Year 8	KS3	
13-14	Year 9	KS3	
14-15	Year 10	KS4	
15-16	Year 11	KS4 (GCSE's taken)	SIXTH FORM
16-17	Year 12	KS5	
17-18	Year 13	KS5 ('A' levels taken)	

As can be seen from Table 2, the phase change to JCSC occurs halfway through Key Stage 2, therefore the first schools have responsibility for KS2 in Years 3 and 4, while JCSC has responsibility for teaching KS2 in Years 5 and 6, including assessment at the end of Year 6. JCSC then has responsibility for the whole of KS3 to KS5.

### **Views of Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of schools in the Coquet Partnership 2022**

Discussions about the structure of the Coquet Partnership have been going on among the teaching professionals and Governing Bodies for a number of years. In late 2019, this resulted in a letter being submitted to the Council from the headteachers of the first schools setting out their request and rationale for consultation to the Council for a consultation with the wider public. However, there was not a consensus for a consultation across all schools at that point and therefore the proposal for consultation was not taken forward.

The Council had also committed to the allocation of capital funding to refurbish or replace school buildings in the Coquet Partnership in its spending plans, but with the arrival of the COVID Pandemic, these projects had to be delayed. Now that building projects can once again be undertaken, the Council is now keen to ensure that the allocated funding for

school building projects is spent within school organisation structures that will deliver improved outcomes for all children and young people and that will have long-term viability and sustainability.

Therefore, in early 2022 Council officers arranged a number of informal meetings with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors in the earlier part of this year to ascertain whether there remained a desire to review how schools are organised in the partnership. The full outcomes of these discussions are set out in a report to the Council's Cabinet which is available at

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=140&MIId=1405>.

A key step forward arising from these discussions was agreement on a vision for the Coquet Partnership, which is:

- Improve the educational outcomes and offer for all pupils within the Coquet Partnership, to ensure every child meets their potential.
- Improving and extending SEND offer for children and young people in Coquet Partnership so that their needs are met locally, and travel times are reduced significantly.
- Ensure the Coquet community supports the education model in order that the community thrives.
- Ensure schools work together to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable and viable model of education for the future, that meets the wider needs of the community.
- Ensuring the best value for NCC capital investment as well as any wider investment opportunity which may arise.

A notable point in relation to this vision is that whatever school structure is in place in the Coquet Partnership, all schools going forward need to work together more closely to improve outcomes for children and young people. In relation to the overall structure of schools that would support this vision, officers asked the headteachers and Chairs of Governors about their views about the benefits and challenges of both the current structure of schools in Coquet Partnership with the phase change at the end of Year 4 and the primary/secondary or '2-tier' system, where the phase change occurs at the end of Year 6. The main views on the two structures were as set out in Table 3:

**Table 3**

<b>Main views on current structure</b>	<b>Main views on 2-tier system (primary/secondary)</b>
Current structure no longer the right fit for the partnership or educational journey	Majority of schools support consultation on 2-tier option for partnership
No accountability for key stages	One school has accountability for whole Key Stage
Transition currently splits key stages	Transition at end of KS2 in line with National Curriculum
Children not 'ready' for middle school at age 9 e.g. travelling on bus	Longer term viability under 2-tier
Schools losing children to primaries in other partnerships	Timing of any change important
Many children are happy to move into Year 5 at 'middle' phase	
Both models have their pros and cons	

There were other themes that arose from discussions with the schools, particularly in relation to provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs in the Coquet. Overall, while there were some varying views about the structure of schools, the majority of schools supported asking the Council to consult on a proposal for a primary/secondary 2-tier structure in the Coquet Partnership.

## **Educational standards and outcomes in the Coquet Partnership**

### Ofsted Ratings

All first schools in the Coquet Partnership currently have an Ofsted rating of 'Good', while JSCS has a rating of Requires Improvement, although in its last monitoring visit by Ofsted it is taking effective action.

### Standards and education outcomes

#### *KS1:*

First and primary schools assess their pupils at the end of KS1 at age 7 in order to identify the support a child will need as they enter KS2. Although the results are collected by the Council for submission to the Department for Education (DfE), they are not published at the school level (although parents will be informed of their own child's results by the school).

#### *KS2:*

Primary schools, middle schools in Northumberland and middle/high schools such as JCSC carry out the national KS2 SAT tests at the end of Year 6. KS2 SAT tests were cancelled in 2020 and 2021, therefore the last available data is from Summer 2019. While

JCSC is responsible for Years 5 and 6 and carries out the KS2 assessment of the whole key stage, the first schools in the partnership are responsible for teaching in Years 3 and 4 of KS2. Table 4 shows the percentage of pupils in JCSC who achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths at the end of KS2 in 2019, 2018 and 2017, together with the average percentage at Northumberland and England level in those years.

**Table 4**

<b>Year</b>	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>Northumberland Average</b>	<b>England Average</b>
2019	27%	66%	65%
2018	38%	65%	64%
2017	25%	61%	61%

The Council's average is based on all schools that test at the end of KS2, which includes all primary schools and middle schools.

**KS4:**

At age 16, students sit their GCSE examinations which marks the end of KS4. The last verified outcomes at GCSE (Key Stage 4) for JCSC were in summer 2019 and these are set out in Table 5. GCSE grades were awarded in 2020 and 2021, but as a result of the COVID pandemic different systems had to be used to award grades in those years. While the DfE has stated that the results in 2020 and 2021 cannot be compared meaningfully to results from 2019 as a result of the change to the award systems, they are also presented in Table 5 for information.

**Table 5 – GCSE results, JCSC**

		<b>GCSE 2019</b>	<b>GCSE 2020</b>	<b>GCSE 2021</b>
Progress 8 (0 = Expected Progress)	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>-0.02</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.64</b>
	Northumberland average	-0.12	N/A	N/A
	England average	-0.03	N/A	N/A
%Achieving Grade 5+ inc Eng and Maths	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>
	Northumberland average	43%	N/A	N/A
	England average	43%	N/A	N/A
Attainment 8 (higher figure is best)	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>42.3</b>
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

Table 5 indicates that JCSC's results in 2019 at GCSE are stronger in comparison at both county and national (England) level, being positioned 6<sup>th</sup> out of 16 high/secondary schools in Northumberland for Progress 8, 11<sup>th</sup> out of 16 for % achieving Grade 5+ including English and Maths, and 9<sup>th</sup> out of 16 for Attainment 8. Although not directly comparable to 2019 results as stated previously, Progress 8 scores in 2020 and 2021 appear to have improved. Furthermore, JCSC has reported that caution was taken in awarding Grade 5 and above in 2020 and 2021, resulting in achievement slightly below 2019.

Table 6 shows the results of the combined pass rate of English and Maths only at Grade 4 and above in 2019, 2020 and 2021, which indicates an improving picture over time

**Table 6 – JCSC Combined pass rate English and Maths**

2019	59.4%
2020	57.9%
2021	62.8%

KS5 ('A' level):

At the end of KS5, students undertake 'A' level examinations or assessments for technical/vocational qualifications. JCSC results at 'A' Level for 2019 are set out in Table 7.

**Table 7 - 'A' level results 2019**

2019		
Progress Score	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>0.12 (average)</b>
Average result per A Level (Grade)	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>C+</b>
	Northumberland average (state funded)	C+
	England average (all schools)	C+
Average Points per A level	<b>JCSC</b>	<b>32.92</b>
	Northumberland average	32.59
	England average	34.01

In relation to other high/secondary schools in Northumberland, JCSC was 4<sup>th</sup> out of 16 for Level 3 value added, 4<sup>th</sup> out of 16 for Average Point Score, 1<sup>st</sup> out of 16 for achievement of grades AAB+ in 2 or more facilitating subjects and 5<sup>th</sup> out of 16 for the best 3 A-levels.

### **Pupil Data and Information**

Table 8, Row 1 shows the number of pupils living in the Coquet Partnership of statutory school age (Reception to Year 11 **but not including children attending specialist**

**provision**) and the number of children who attend a school in the partnership; Row 2 and Row 3 break this number down by school phase.

**Table 8 – Number of pupils living in Coquet area (excluding pupils attending special schools) and where they attend school**

<b>Row 1</b>	<b>Total no. Pupils living in Coquet Partnership catchment areas (Reception to Yr 11)</b>	<b>Actual No. Pupils living in Coquet area who attend Coquet Partnership schools (Reception to Yr 11)</b>
	<b>1,651</b>	<b>1,234 (75% of Total)</b>
<b>Row 2</b>	<b>Total no. pupils who live catchment areas of first schools and Warkworth Primary</b>	<b>Actual No. pupils who live catchment areas of first schools and Warkworth Primary and who also attend those schools Autumn 2021</b>
	<b>698</b>	<b>596 (85% Total)</b>
<b>Row 3</b>	<b>Total no. pupils who live in JCSC catchment area (Year 5 to year 11)</b>	<b>Actual No. Pupils who live in Coquet area and who also attend JCSC Autumn 2021 (Year 5 to year 11)</b>
	<b>953</b>	<b>638 (67% of Total)</b>

Row 2 in Table 8 indicates that parents of 15% of the pupils who live in the Coquet catchment area choose to send their children to schools outside of the area rather than to the first schools or Warkworth CE Primary. Row 3 indicates that parents of 33% of pupils who live in the JCSC catchment choose to send their children to schools outside of the JCSC catchment area.

Some schools in Coquet Partnership do attract a small number of pupils from other Northumberland catchments. Once these pupils are taken into account, Table 9 shows the number of surplus (unfilled) places by school phase:

**Table 9 – Number of Surplus places in Coquet Partnership**

<b>School Phase</b>	<b>No. Surplus (unfilled) places</b>
All First Schools	*194
JCSC	174

*\*Note – even if all children living in first school catchments attended those schools, there would still be some surplus places.*

In simple funding terms, if the first schools attracted the 15% of pupils (see Table 8) who live in their catchment areas but attend other schools, they would have an additional £338k allocated to their budgets. There are more pupils who live in the catchment of JCSC and attend other schools than there are surplus places at the school, but if JCSC was able to fill its 174 surplus places from that group of pupils (see Table 9), it would have an additional £755k in its budget. Therefore, attracting local pupils into schools is a key factor in the viability and sustainability of a school partnership.

The number of children being born in the Coquet Partnership who will enter the school system in the future has fallen slightly in the last 2 years or so, but overall it is relatively steady when compared to other partnerships in the county; also, when compared to data over a longer period the numbers of children being born in the partnership appear to be cyclical (Table 10). However, the number of future pupils does point to the need for all schools in the partnership to attract their catchment pupils in order to maintain a viable and sustainable school system. This is particularly important in relation to a school’s financial viability, as under the National Schools Funding Formula each child attracts a lump sum which forms the majority of a school’s budget.

**Table 10 – Coquet Partnership future pupil numbers**

<b>Pupils entering Reception in September 2025</b>	<b>Pupils entering Reception in September 2024</b>	<b>Pupils entering Reception in September 2023</b>	<b>Pupils entering Reception in September 2022</b>
113	119	139	143

There is some housebuilding planned within the partnership locally over the next 5 years or so which will impact on a small number of schools, but due to parental preference there is sufficient capacity for pupils within their own catchment schools for the foreseeable future without the need to create additional school places.

### **Special Educational Needs**

There is currently no specialist provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) within the Coquet Partnership. Currently, there are 60 pupils from Reception to Year 11 who have to travel daily to specialist provision outside of their local area for their education. In particular, the Council’s data indicates there is a growing need for additional specialist provision for children and young people with Autism (ASD)



and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary SEN need right across the county. This growing trend also applies to the Coquet Partnership, as can be seen from the forecasts for number of children in special schools with ASD and SEMH in Table 11 and Table 12.

**Table 11 - Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need living in Coquet Partnership**

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2022	1	2	4	13	3	9	3	8	4	4	7	7
2023	1	1	2	9	12	5	12	3	6	5	4	8
2024	1	1	2	5	9	22	7	15	3	9	6	4
2025	1	1	2	3	5	16	29	9	12	4	9	6
2026	1	1	2	4	3	8	21	38	7	17	4	10
2027	1	1	2	4	4	6	11	27	31	10	17	4
2028	1	1	2	4	4	6	7	14	22	41	10	19
2029	1	1	2	4	4	6	8	10	12	30	43	11

*Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group*

**Table 12 - Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need living in Coquet Partnership**

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2022	3	5	8	10	7	8	8	9	9	8	5	7
2023	3	7	8	8	14	6	7	10	10	8	8	5
2024	3	8	11	9	11	11	5	8	10	8	9	8
2025	3	8	12	11	11	9	11	6	9	9	9	8
2026	3	8	12	13	15	10	9	12	6	7	9	8
2027	3	7	12	13	17	13	9	10	13	5	8	9
2028	3	7	11	13	17	14	12	10	11	11	6	7
2029	3	7	12	11	17	14	13	14	11	9	12	6

*Note: Shaded figures show year on year increase within a particular year group*

A small but significant number of children in the Coquet Partnership are also diagnosed with Speech, Learning and Communication needs particularly in the primary years, which often leads to a diagnosis of ASD in the secondary years.

Discussions on the structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership have also opened the opportunity to share this data with headteachers in order to have a 'joined-up' approach to

all education in the area. Therefore, officers and headteachers have had some initial discussions to explore how and where appropriate specialist provision could be provided in the Coquet area. This consultation is therefore also your opportunity to share your views with us on these initial ideas for SEN provision and these are set out in Part 2 'Proposal for Reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership' later in this document.

### **Early Years Provision**

Northumberland County Council also has a statutory duty to manage the availability of childcare provision across the county and to ensure sufficient flexible provision for working parents, parents taking up training or returning to work and for eligible children in receipt of the 2, 3 and 4 year old free funded entitlement.

Including settings based at schools, there are currently 13 early years provisions across the Hadston and Coquet Partnership. These providers have all been judged to be Good or better by Ofsted and officers have also judged that they provide enough sufficient, sustainable choice and flexibility to meet current demand in the area.

As a result, developing new similar provision or extending the current offer in some schools would be likely to have a direct impact on the current stable Early Years market for some long established private and voluntary section provisions, who also offer wrap around and holiday care, including specialist tailored provision for 2yr olds who serve the local community in proximity.

Given the potential to destabilise the Early Years market and in view of the consultation on school structure, the Council is not proposing to make any changes to the current Early Years offer within the Coquet Partnership as part of this consultation.

## PART 2 - PROPOSAL FOR REORGANISATION OF SCHOOLS IN THE COQUET PARTNERSHIP



In the light of the data and information set out in Part 1 of this consultation document, the Council is consulting on whether or not to reorganise the structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership and would like your views on the following proposed models of school organisation.

### Model A – Current school structure of Coquet Partnership

Model A (see Table 13) is the current structure of schools and if there was no change in the Coquet Partnership, this structure would remain in place:

**Table 13 - Model A: current structure of Coquet Partnership**

School	Number on Roll in Jan 2022	Capacity (net number of children able to be educated in the school building)	Forms of Entry (size of classes in each year group)	Planned Admissions Number (PAN)
Amble First	108	150	1FE	30
Amble Links First	129	138	1FE	30
Broomhill First	66	75	0.5FE	15
Grange View CE First	83	150	1FE	30
Red Row First	83	120	1FE	**29
*NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School	139	159	0.83FE	25
JCSC	735 inc sixth form	1058	4FE	120

\*Note while NCEA Warkworth is included to provide the full overview of the partnership, it would not form any proposals as part of this consultation.

\*\*Should the current structure remain in place in Coquet Partnership, the PAN at Red Row may be changed to 30 in future years (not for Sept 2022 or 2023 admissions) as a tidying up exercise.

It should be noted that for significant improvements to be made in outcomes at KS2 if this structure is retained, there would have to be increased collaboration between the first schools and JCSC.

### **Model B – Proposed Model of Organisation**

Model B (see Table 14) proposes a fully primary/secondary structure in the Coquet Partnership. Under Model B, all current first schools in the Partnership would extend their age ranges to become either age 2-11, 3-11 or 4-11 primary schools and would retain their current Year 4 into Year 5 in the first year of reorganisation, and retaining Year 6 in the second year becoming full primary schools at that point.

JCSC would reduce its age range in a phased way from an age 9 to 18 school to an age 11 to 18 secondary school, having Years 7 to 13 (sixth form). In the first year of reorganisation the school would operate with Years 6 to 13 and in the second year and thereafter it would operate with Years 7 to 13.

It is not possible to expand Amble First School to become a primary school on its current site, therefore it is proposed that it would relocate to the current Year 5 to Year 8 building of JCSC at South Avenue under Model B.

It is also proposed under Model B that Red Row First School would increase its Planned Admission Number from 29 to 30 as a tidying up exercise.

**Table 14 - Model B: Proposed structure of Coquet Partnership under primary/secondary structure**

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on Roll in Jan 2022</b>	<b>Planned Capacity (net number of children able to be educated in the school building)</b>	<b>Planned Forms of Entry (size of classes in each year group)</b>	<b>Planned Admission Number (PAN)</b>
Amble First	108 (150)	210	1FE	30
Amble Links First	129 (138)	210	1FE	30
Broomhill First	66 (75)	105	0.5FE	15
Grange View CE First	83 (150)	210	1FE	30
Red Row First	83 (120)	210	1FE	30
NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School	139	159	0.83FE	25
JCSC	735 inc sixth form	810	4FE	120

## **Proposal for Special Educational Needs provision in Coquet Partnership**

Earlier in this document, data and information was provided to demonstrate the growing numbers of children and young people in the Coquet Partnership in need of specialist educational provision, which is currently unavailable within the local area. Early discussions with headteachers, including a headteacher in a local special school, have indicated that a specialist provision within the Coquet Partnership is necessary to prevent this needy group of children and young people having to take long journeys to and from school and to enable them to be educated as close to their home communities as possible.

In the light of this ambition, it is proposed that a specialist provision could be developed and managed within Coquet Partnership as a satellite provision of Barndale House Special School. This satellite model has already been implemented in another part of the county, with Ashdale Special School in Ashington being a satellite of The Dales Special School in Blyth. It is further proposed that the satellite school for Coquet Partnership could be located within the current JCSC building at South Avenue under the Model B proposal along with Amble First School, as it is large enough to be fully separated into two provisions. Alternative proposals for SEND provision in the Coquet Partnership are welcomed as part of this consultation, including ideas if Model A (current school structure) was to remain in place.

### **Timeline for implementation**

The outcomes of this consultation will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in September 2022. If the Cabinet decides that the current organisation of schools should remain in place i.e. Model A, the timeline for implementation would relate to the programme of investment in school buildings only where it is decided investment is needed. A business case would need to be prepared for approval by the Council's Cabinet and this would set out in detail the planned works to schools, the costs and the proposed timeline for completion before the project could commence. In relation to JCSC, it is envisaged that the refurbishment or new build would be completed during the academic year beginning September 2025 or as near as practically possible.

Should the Council's Cabinet decide to approve the implementation of Model B at a future point, the timeline for the reorganisation of the schools would be as follows:

## **1 September 2024**

- The first schools in the Coquet Partnership would extend their age ranges to become primary schools and would retain their Year 4 pupils on roll at the schools on 31 August 2024 as they become Year 5.
- Works needed to the buildings of the first schools to enable them to become primary schools with provision for Years 5 and 6 would be completed in time for the new academic year.
- JCSC would not receive a Year 5 and would operate with Years 6 onwards.

## **1 September 2025**

- The primary schools in the Coquet Partnership would retain their Year 5 pupils on roll at the schools on 31 August 2025 as they become Year 6.
- Pupils on roll in Year 6 at JCSC on 31 August 2025 would become the new Year 7 as the school reorganises to become an age 11 to 18 secondary school. Entry into JCSC is at Year 7 only from this point forward.

## **Other areas for consideration as part of these proposals**

### Implications for staff

If the current structure of schools remains in place in the Coquet Partnership, there would be no specific implications for staff working in the schools.

There would be implications for staff if the structure proposed under Model B (primary/secondary) was implemented. First schools becoming primary schools would need to redesign their curriculum and staffing structures to incorporate appropriate teaching and learning for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and this would be likely to include the recruitment of additional staff. Likewise, JCSC would no longer need teaching staff for Years 5 and 6 and they would also redesign their staffing structures.

In order to ensure that as many staff as possible would be retained within the Coquet Partnership of schools if a restructure is approved, Council HR Officers will work with schools and staff representatives (Trade Unions) during this consultation period to develop a 'Staffing Protocol' agreement to ensure that the appointment process across the schools is fair for all staff.

### Buildings and capital funding

As stated earlier in this consultation document, the Council has already allocated £25.5m towards investment in school buildings in the Coquet Partnership. During the consultation period, officers will develop a budget for carrying out building works under both Model A and Model B during the informal consultation.

The costs for the proposed specialist education provision for the Coquet Partnership will also be developed during the consultation period.

All indicative costs would then be presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration along with the outcomes of this consultation to assist them in making their decision in light of the recommendations put forward.

### School Catchment Areas

School catchment areas would remain the same under either Model A or Model B (primary/secondary). However, under Model B first schools would extend the age range they cover up to the end of Year 6. Similarly, the catchment area of JCSC would remain the same under either model, but in the case of Model B it would only include pupils from Year 7 onwards. The following map shows the individual catchment areas of the first schools and the 'greater' catchment area of JCSC outlined around them.

Any suggestions for changes to catchment areas and their rationale are welcome as part of this consultation.

### Admissions Arrangements

There would be no change to the Admissions Arrangements into Reception classes in the first schools in the partnership under Model A or under Model B should they become primary schools. Admissions into JCSC would remain the same under Model A i.e. into Year 5, but under Model B, admissions into the school would change to entry at Year 7.

### Transport

There would be no changes to the way in which children are assessed for eligibility for school transport suggested as part of this consultation under either Model A or Model B.

If Model B was approved for implementation, pupils including those eligible for transport would remain in their first schools for an additional 2 years in Years 5 and 6 and therefore, there may be a small saving to the Council's Home to School Transport policy as a result.

### Sport and recreation

As a result of the Council's commitment to capital investment of £25.5m in the Coquet Partnership whether under Model A or Model B, there will be an opportunity to provide enhanced sporting facilities at the JCSC site as a result of remodelling/rebuilding. If Model B is approved for implementation, there may also be an opportunity to improve the current sport and recreation facilities in some first schools.



## Alternative Proposals

While this consultation has presented Model A (current structure) and Model B (primary/secondary structure) as the proposed alternative, you may have an alternative suggestion for addressing the issues set out in this document. If you have any alternative suggestion, please set this out in the questionnaire and response form that accompanies this document.

## How can I find out more about this proposal?

A public drop-in event has been arranged during this consultation period for you to find out further information about any aspect of this proposal.

### Public Drop-in event

**Date: Saturday 11 June, 10.00 - 4.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Gloster Terrace, Amble, NE65 0LN**

**All interested parties are welcome to drop-in at any time within the above hours.**

There will also be separate meetings held in schools with staff working in schools in the Coquet Partnership and their representatives, and with Governing Bodies during the consultation period. Staff and Governors will be contacted directly with the date and time of these meetings.

An online Padlet dedicated to the consultation on school structure is also available by following this link <https://padlet.com/Northumberland/Coquet>

Additional information is posted on the padlet, including Frequently Asked questions that may assist you in your response to the consultation.

## How can I submit my views about this proposal?

A six-week consultation (school weeks) on the proposals set out in this consultation document began on **Wednesday 11 May and will end at midnight on 29 June 2022.**

The Council is very keen to hear your views on the proposal set out in this consultation document and also to learn if you have any alternative proposals.

A link to a questionnaire is here: <https://haveyoursay.northumberland.gov.uk/education-skills/proposals-for-school-organisation-in-the-coquet-pa/> (**copy and paste link into browser**) please complete the electronic questionnaire if you can. However, if you or someone you know would prefer to send a hard copy, please request a printed form by

contacting [educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk) stating that you require a printed survey form for the Consultation on School Structures in the Coquet Partnership.

To return your completed hard copy form, please send to:

**School Organisation and Resources Team**

**Children's Services,**

**County Hall**

**Morpeth**

**Northumberland**

**NE61 2EF**

At the end of this consultation, all feedback received will be considered by the Council's Cabinet before deciding on whether or not to move to the next steps in the process.

**Thank you for participating in this consultation**

# Proposals for School Organisation in the Coquet Partnership

## Overview

Northumberland County Council has committed £25.5m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Coquet Partnership. However, before carrying out this work to schools, the Council needs to know that it is investing in a school structure that will deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people, and that it is sustainable for the current and future generations to come.

Over the last few months, Council officers have been talking to headteachers and school Chairs of Governors to gain their views on the current educational structure in Coquet. While there were some varying responses, the school leaders all agreed that it is now the right time for the views of everyone with an interest in education in Coquet to be captured. The schools have therefore asked the Council to carry out a wider consultation with parents, staff, governors, pupils and the wider public.

This consultation document sets out the key issues faced by schools in the partnership and asks for your views on whether the current structure or the proposed primary/secondary school structure would deliver a good and sustainable school system in the Coquet area. We are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could be a viable option for delivering these aims.

Whether you are a member of staff in a Coquet school, a parent of school-age children, a local resident, or anyone with an interest in education in the area, I hope that you will take this opportunity to submit your views and help to shape the future of schools in the Coquet Partnership.

Audrey Kingham

Joint Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Northumberland County Council

## Introduction

Northumberland County Council has committed £25.5m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Coquet Partnership. However, before carrying out this work to schools, the Council needs to know that it is investing in a school structure that will deliver consistently good outcomes for all children and young people, and that it is sustainable for the current and future generations to come.

Over the last few months, Council officers have been talking to headteachers and school Chairs of Governors to gain their views on the current educational structure in Coquet. While there were some varying responses, the school leaders all agreed that it is now the right time for the views of everyone with an interest in education in Coquet to be captured. The schools have therefore asked the Council to carry out a wider consultation with parents, staff, governors, pupils and the wider public.

This consultation document sets out the key issues faced by schools in the partnership, and asks for your views on whether the current structure or the proposed primary/secondary school structure would deliver a good and sustainable school system in the Coquet area. We are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could be a viable option for delivering these aims.

Whether you are a member of staff in a Coquet school, a parent of school-age children, a local resident, or anyone with an interest in education in the area, I hope that you will take this opportunity to submit your views and help to shape the future of schools in the Coquet Partnership.

Audrey Kingham

Joint Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Northumberland County Council

## Your details

1 What is your name?

2 What is your email address?

3 What is your postcode (eg. NE65 0TD)?

*(Required)*

4 In what capacity are you responding to the consultation (scroll through to most appropriate description of your capacity):

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Amble First School
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Amble Links First School
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Broomhill First School
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Grange View CE First School
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Red Row First School
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending James Calvert Spence College
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School
- Governor of Amble First School
- Governor of Amble Links First School
- Governor of Broomhill First School
- Governor of Grange View CE First School
- Governor of Red Row First School
- Governor of James Calvert Spence College
- Governor of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School
- Staff Member of Amble First School
- Staff Member of Amble Links First School
- Staff Member of Broomhill First School
- Staff Member of Grange View CE First School
- Staff Member of Red Row First School
- Staff Member of James Calvert Spence College
- Staff Member of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School
- Pupil/Student of Amble First School
- Pupil/Student of Amble Links First School
- Pupil/Student of Broomhill First School
- Pupil/Student of Grange View CE First School
- Pupil/Student of Red Row First School
- Pupil/Student of James Calvert Spence College
- Pupil/Student of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School
- Parent/Carer of pupil/student in another school in Northumberland
- Staff Member in another School in Northumberland
- Governor in another School in Northumberland
- Pupil/Student in another School in Northumberland
- Councillor on Amble Town Council
- Councillor on Acklington Parish Council
- Councillor on East Chevington Parish Council
- Councillor on Hauxley Parish Council
- Councillor on Togston Parish Council
- Councillor on Warkworth Parish Council
- Councillor on Widdrington Village Parish Council
- Councillor on Widdrington Station and Stobswood Parish Council
- Resident/member of the community living in the Coquet Partnership
- Resident/member of the community living outside of the Coquet Partnership
- Other

5 If you selected 'Other' in question 7 please state below



6 Having read the consultation document, which structure of schools in the Coquet Partnership do you think will be the best option for providing improved outcomes for all children and young people in the area and for securing a sustainable and viable education in the Coquet Partnership for this and future generations?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- MODEL A (current structure, phase change at end of Year 4)
- MODEL B (primary/secondary structure, phase change at end of Year 6)
- DON'T KNOW

7 Please give the reasons for your answer below

*(Required)*

8 Having read the consultation document, if Model B was implemented in the Coquet Partnership do you think the proposal to locate a satellite school run by Barndale Special School for children and young people with Special Educational Needs on a shared site with Amble First School Amble is a good solution for improving the SEND provision in the Coquet area and enabling this group of pupils/students to be educated closer to and within their home communities?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

9 Please give the reasons for your answer below:

*(Required)*

10 Having read the consultation document, if Model A remains in place within the Coquet Partnership do you think the proposal to locate a satellite school run by Barndale Special School for children and young people with Special Educational Needs on a shared site with a school in the partnership is a good solution for improving the SEND provision in the Coquet area and enabling this group of pupils/students to be educated closer to and within their home communities?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

11 Please give reasons for your answer below

*(Required)*

12 Do you have an alternative suggestion or proposal you would like to put forward either in relation to the school structure in Coquet Partnership or in relation to specialist provision for children and young people with SEND in the area? (If not, please state 'None')

(Required)

13 Do you have any general or additional comments that you would like the Council's Cabinet to consider, eg. early years or catchment areas? (If not, please state none).

(Required)

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS CONSULTATION**

**Please note:** If you contact officers of the Council directly then your response will be re-directed to the consultation inbox to ensure your views are taken into account. Unfortunately, due to the potential number of responses to this consultation it will be impossible for officers to individually acknowledge receipt of replies or comments.

**Related information:**

Coquet Partnership padlet is [here](https://padlet.com/Northumberland/Coquet) <<https://padlet.com/Northumberland/Coquet>> .

## Consultation Register – NCC

### Proposals for the Coquet Partnership

Consultation – 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022

<b>Consultees</b>
<p>Schools in Coquet Partnership directly affected by proposals – Governors, Staff, Parents and Pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amble First</li> <li>• Amble Links First</li> <li>• Broomhill First</li> <li>• Grange View First</li> <li>• Red Row First</li> <li>• James Calvert Spence College</li> <li>• NCEA Warkworth CE Primary</li> </ul>
<p>Other Northumberland Schools in local area possibly affected – Headteacher and Chair of Governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branton Community Primary</li> <li>• Ellingham C of E Aided Primary</li> <li>• Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E Primary</li> <li>• Felton C of E Primary</li> <li>• Hipsburn Primary</li> <li>• Longhoughton C of E Primary</li> <li>• Seahouses Primary</li> <li>• Shilbottle Primary</li> <li>• St Michaels C of E Primary</li> <li>• St. Paul's RC Voluntary Aided Primary</li> <li>• Swansfield Park Primary</li> <li>• Swarland Primary</li> <li>• The Duchess's Community High</li> <li>• Whittingham C of E Primary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCC Website</li> <li>• Libraries - Amble Library and Widdrington Library</li> </ul>



<p><b>Diocesan representatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CE, Paul Rikeard</li> <li>• RC, Deborah Fox</li> </ul>
<p><b>Town &amp; Parish Councils</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amble Town Council</li> <li>• East Chevington</li> <li>• Acklington</li> <li>• Widdrington and Stobhill</li> <li>• Widdrington</li> <li>• Warkworth</li> <li>• Hauxley</li> <li>• Togston</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local MP (for information/response)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annemarie Trevelyn MP</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Members (for information/response)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amble West with Warkworth (<i>Cllr Jeff Watson</i>)</li> <li>• Amble (<i>Cllr Terry Clark</i>)</li> <li>• Druridge Bay (<i>Cllr. Scott Dickinson</i>)</li> <li>• Pegswood (<i>Cllr David Towns</i>)</li> <li>• Longhorsley (<i>Cllr Glen Sanderson</i>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEU</li> <li>• NASUWT</li> <li>• Unison</li> <li>• ASCL</li> <li>• NAHT</li> <li>• GMB</li> </ul>

## Equality Impact Assessment

***To be completed for all key changes, decisions and proposals. Cite specific data and consultation evidence wherever possible. Further guidance is available at: <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=3281>***

### ***Duties which need to be considered:***

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

### **PART 1 – Overview of the change, decision or proposal**

#### 1) Title of the change, decision or proposal:

Proposals for the reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership of schools from the current structure to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure.

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

Consultation on proposals for schools in the Coquet Partnership (with the exception of NCEA Warkworth CE Primary School which has previously reorganised) to reorganise to a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of education has taken place with all relevant stakeholders, including parents of pupils on roll at schools in the partnership, staff of those schools, Governors of the schools, relevant parish/town council and pupils/students.

The schools that would be reorganised should the statutory proposal be published and subsequently approved would be:

- Amble First School
- Amble Links First School
- Broomhill First School
- Grange View CE First School
- Red Row First School
- James Calvert Spence College (JCSC)

Consultation with these stakeholders has also taken place on a proposal to provide additional specialist SEND places to meet the growing need for places for children and young people diagnosed with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) within the Coquet Partnership area. This proposal would see Barndale Special School in Alnwick extend its provision to include a satellite site based within the South Avenue site of the current JCSC.

Cabinet approved consultation in the light of both the feedback received from the Governing Bodies in the Coquet Partnership and the proposed investment of £25.5m (previously to consultation) in school buildings in the partnership.

If the Statutory Proposals are approved for publication, Cabinet would need to make a final decision on the proposals within two months of the end of the representation period.

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

Disability   Sex   Age   ~~Race~~   ~~Religion~~   Sexual orientation

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

Employees who are married/in civil partnerships

4) The characteristics checked above are not relevant because:

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

As the statutory proposals do not include school closure proposals it is not envisaged that there would be any staff redundancies within the current first schools. Indeed, in relation to the first schools and to Barndale Special School, it is envisaged that additional staff would be needed to implement the proposed changes to these schools.

James Calvert Spence College would no longer need staff for Year 5 and 6 classes as it would become an age 11-18 secondary school and therefore there may be some staff within that school that could become at risk of redundancy. Existing HR policies covering organisational change and redundancy would apply to staff employed at any of the maintained schools affected. These are designed to ensure that the equalities duties of the Council and the schools are fully met.

Reasonable adjustments would be made for disabled members of staff. The Council operates a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled members of staff.

## **PART 2 – Relevance to different Protected Characteristics**

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

### **Disability**

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

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

There are 11 students on roll at the first schools in Coquet Partnership who have been allocated an EHCP, while there are 10 students with an EHCP on roll at JCSC.

It is therefore expected that a number of students on roll at these schools will have EHCPs by the time the proposal is planned to be implemented as soon as possible after **11 May 2023**. Should the proposal be approved, individual transition plans would be developed to ensure that the impact of the relocation on this group of students is minimal and planned for effectively.

Any students who were offered a place at the proposed satellite site of Barndale Special School in Amble would similarly have suitable transition plans in place in accordance with their needs.

Any member of staff, or parent or a carer of a student at one of the schools who has a disability would not be affected disproportionately by the proposal as any reasonable adjustments or arrangements would be put in place at the new buildings as part of the design process.

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

Refer to para. 5

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

No evidence has arisen during consultation that the implementation of the proposed statutory proposals would affect any current arrangements for disabled people to participate in public life. However, in relation to residents living in the areas around the location of the school sites in particular, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

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

No evidence has arisen during consultation to suggest that the implementation of the proposed statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to disabled people. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

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

No evidence has arisen during consultation to suggest that the implementation of the proposed statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to disabled people. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

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

The premise of these proposals in relation to the reorganisation of the mainstream schools is that educational outcomes for all students in their schools would improve. Therefore, it is envisaged there would be disproportionate advantage of the proposal to all students on roll at the relevant mainstream schools within the partnership.

In relation to the development of a satellite site of Barndale Special School in Amble, while it is also envisaged that their educational outcomes would improve, they would also be able to receive their education closer to their home communities thus reducing travelling times to school and also enabling them to develop friendships with students in their local area. It is therefore envisaged that these students would be disproportionately advantaged both educationally and socially.

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

Should this proposal be implemented, there would potentially be opportunities for positive impacts for disabled people within the design of the new buildings that are not currently in place in existing buildings. See also para. 10.

## **Sex (Gender)**

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

Schools in the Coquet Partnership and Barndale House Special School are co-educational.

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

No evidence has arisen during consultation to suggest that either boys or girls would be disproportionately advantaged or disadvantaged by the statutory proposals. However, should this proposal be approved to go to statutory consultation, this EIA would be updated with any evidence where it suggested that there could be any gender based disproportionate advantage or disadvantage.

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

There is currently no evidence from consultation to suggest that the ability of people of a certain gender to participate in public life would be affected by the implementation of the statutory proposals. However, should any impact in this regard come to light, ameliorating and proportionate measures would be investigated to address any negative impact.

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

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

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

Should the statutory proposals be implemented, the risk of harassment or victimisation of people of a certain gender, such as bullying, would be monitored. Should evidence be identified that risk of harassment had increased, relevant actions stated would be undertaken to address the reasons for harassment or victimisation, including awareness programmes.

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

No evidence has so far been identified to suggest that people of a certain gender could be disproportionately disadvantaged through the implementation of the proposal. However, ameliorating actions would be implemented in the event that issues were identified.

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

It is envisaged that the positive impacts of both statutory proposals would affect a people of different sexual orientations equally. However, while none have been so far identified, any opportunities to create positive impacts for people with different genders would be identified.

## **Age**

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

First schools in the Coquet Partnership provide education to young people from the age of 2,3 or 4 to age 9, while JCSC provides education to young people between the ages of 9 and 18. Students on roll at these schools at the proposed date of

implementation would be impacted. It is proposed that the new Barndale Special School satellite site would educate children and young people aged 2 to 18.

Staff at the schools all schools identified in the statutory proposals are employed equitably in accordance with the relevant school and council's employment policies. All appropriate HR processes and procedures would be adhered to throughout any staff consultation and redundancy process (if any were necessary) in line with NCC policies.

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

While the premise of the proposal is that students would be advantaged educationally, there may be other impacts such as shorter journeys to school e.g. for children attending first schools that become primaries, they would receive their Year 5 and 6 education at their local school, while children who may be allocated a place at the new Barndale Special school satellite would be likely to have a shorted journey to school than may have been the case if they attended an alternative specialist provision. Therefore, shorted journeys would be seen as advantageous to those students.

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

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

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

There is no evidence to suggest from informal consultation that the proposed statutory proposals would affect public attitudes to different age groups.

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

Should the proposals be approved to go to statutory consultation and evidence come to light that there are risks that people of different age groups could be disproportionately disadvantaged by the proposal, this EIA would be updated, and reasonable steps approved to be implemented to address such risk.

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

The premise of the proposal is to create a positive impact for all students on roll in schools in the Coquet Partnership and for those students who would be allocated a

place at the Barndale Special School satellite site in relation to improved educational outcomes.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

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

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would create any barriers to students accessing at any of the schools that would be included in the statutory proposals as all students eligible for Home to School Transport would receive it.

In relation to the proposed reorganisation of the Coquet Partnership mainstream schools, any parent of a student in a school in the partnership who may be pregnant or who has other children under 26 weeks old would not be disadvantaged as children in the first schools would stay at their school as it became primary up to the end of Year 6. This could therefore be advantageous to this protected group.

Any staff of schools named in the statutory proposals who may be pregnant would have the same rights extended to them under reorganisation, or in the case of Barndale Special School, if such staff took up a post at the proposed satellite site in Amble.

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

See para.26.

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

There is no evidence to suggest that the statutory proposals would have any effect on the ability of pregnant women or those with children under 26 weeks participate in public life under the proposals.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

See para. 26.

## **Sexual Orientation**

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

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

There is currently no evidence to suggest that any student on roll in a school named in the statutory proposals or a member of staff who identifies as LGBT employed by these schools would be disproportionately impacted positively or negatively should approval be given to implement the proposal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Human Rights

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

While there is no specific evidence to suggest that the implementation of the proposal would impact positively on human rights, the rationale for this proposal as originally consulted on is to provide improved educational outcomes for all students on roll in schools in the Coquet Partnership and for those students who would be allocated a place at the satellite site of Barndale Special School in Amble, with a view to improving the life chances of those students.

### PART 3 - Course of Action

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

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

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

From the initial analysis of the possible negative or positive impacts of the proposal on the groups with protected characteristics, the premise of the proposal as originally consulted on suggests that students on roll at schools in the Coquet Partnership and those students who would be allocated a place at the satellite site of Barndale Special School in Amble would be disproportionately advantaged.

Should a decision be made by the Council's Cabinet to take move to the formal statutory processes, any evidence arising from the statutory consultations that suggests that there could be possible negative impacts, identified risks would be analysed to establish whether or not there were certain risks to any or all of those groups. Steps to reduce negative impacts or enhance positive impacts would then be defined.

#### **PART 4 - Ongoing Monitoring**

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

This EIA has assessed in the light of feedback from the informal consultation period set out earlier in this report. Should the proposals be approved and the process move to the publication of statutory proposals, the EIA would be further updated at the end of the statutory period. Appropriate action would be identified in the light of the consultation and where necessary, an action plan with timescales developed.

#### **PART 5 - Authorisation**

Name of Head of Service and Date Approved

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



## Northumberland County Council

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

**8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

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#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL REPRESENTATIONS 2021-2022**

Report of Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services, Graham Reiter and Audrey Kingham

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 require the submission of an Annual Report by every local authority which "provides a mechanism by which the local authority can be kept informed of the operation of its complaints procedure."

This report has been prepared in conjunction with regulatory requirements and provides data and analysis of information in relation to feedback from complaints, compliments and other enquiries, submitted to Children's Services and those referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This information is produced with the aim of providing intelligence to show where lessons can be learned and service improvements may be required.

The data used for this report has been received during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

This report will inform members of the Committee of:

- How feedback from complaints, compliments and other enquiries for Children's Services are managed;
- Statistical information from 2021/22;
- Learning arising out of the complaints received including where action has been or is to be taken in order to improve service provision;
- Decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in respect of complaints they received about Children's Services.

## **Recommendations**

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

## **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the “Living & Learning” priority in the NCC Corporate Plan 2021-24.

## **Key Issues**

1. Over 2021/22 the number of children social care complaints reported is lower than last year, however, compliments have increased, particularly those reported by independent providers.
2. Every complaint is handled in a person-centred way, taking into account risk, seriousness, complexity or sensitivity of events.
3. When it is appropriate we are using findings to improve service provision and the experience of service users and their families.

## **Background**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Children's Services want local people who use social services to have a strong voice in helping to monitor, develop and improve the way we work. Customer experience information helps us understand how our services affect the lives of people who use our services, their carers and families and in turn this helps inform our service development. Complaints handling for children's social care is a statutory function governed by The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 for Children's Services. Complaints falling outside this procedure are handled using the Council's own corporate complaints procedure.
- 1.2 The Representations, or complaints, procedure is for a child or young person involved with social care services to make representations, including complaints, about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's children's social services provision; and for any other appropriate person to act on behalf of the child or young person concerned or to make a complaint in their own right.
- 1.3 People who use our services are encouraged to give feedback about their experiences and the service also welcomes comments, compliments, and suggestions to provide a broad and balanced feedback of service user experiences.

### **2. Making a complaint**

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

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

- 2.2 Children's Services staff ensure that all children of an appropriate age, who are in receipt of services as a Looked After Child, are provided with a copy of a complaints leaflet. Information is also readily available to children and young people via the Council website and the Mind of My Own app.
- 2.3 Northumberland County Council have a dedicated team managing all representations received. The Client Relations Team are separate to the main Children's Services department to maintain a level of independence from front line service providers.
- 2.4 In order to raise a concern or make a complaint, children, young people, their parents/carers/guardians/appropriate adult may:
  - talk to their relevant support staff to let them try and resolve the issue with them direct;
  - Email the [clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk) team
  - Write to the Complaints Manager for Children's Services at County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF
  - Telephone the Client Relations Team on 01670 628888

- Use the Mind of My Own app.

### 3. Numbers and Analysis

- 3.1 The Client Relations Team have recorded and responded to 233 enquiries this year. Enquiries are matters where the issue does not necessarily meet the requirements of formal complaint, for example, the individual team have not had the opportunity to attempt to resolve the matter previously; or may be outside the jurisdiction of the Council's own complaint process, such as a school complaint, but still require a response, advice or guidance.
- 3.2 With regard to formal recorded complaints, the table below shows how many complaints have been recorded in relation to Children's Services (both social care and education) and under which process (social care or corporate), broken down into individual financial years. The figures demonstrate an overall decrease in the number of complaints recorded for this year. This could be credited to matters being resolved much earlier at enquiry stage as described in 3.1. Officers are provided with an opportunity to attempt resolution without the need for formal complaint and often manage to do so.
- 3.3 Most complaints received are from adults in relation to their involvement with children's social care where their dissatisfaction relates solely to the impact on themselves and not the child. Where it is clear the adult complaining is not doing so on behalf of or in relation to a child but still require a response, then they are considered under the corporate process. [Getting the Best from Complaints statutory guidance; Sections 2.7 and 2.8]

Year	Social Care	Corporate	Total
2019/20	46	4	50
2020/21	33	14	47
2021/22	29	7	36

- 3.4 Of the 36 complaints received, there were only 2 from Looked After young people. The majority of complaints received in relation to Children's Services are from parents/carers or other involved relevant adults.
- 3.5 It is generally understood that Looked After children and young people tend to raise concerns through the many other routes available to them. This includes their allocated social worker, IRO, through care team meetings or advocates. Concerns raised through these routes are generally dealt with either the Care Home Managers or by working with the individual child/young person to ensure matters are fully resolved promptly and effectively.
- 3.6 Individual residential units record any concerns raised direct with them, how they are managed and the outcome achieved. For 2021/22 figures were recorded as below.



Unit	Complaints 2019/20	2020/21 (Covid impact)	2021/22
Barndale	0	0	0
Coanwood	0	5	0
Kyloe	24	44	20
Phoenix	2	1	4
Thorndale	4	4	1

2.7 Although the figures are considerably higher for Kyloe House in comparison to the other residential units; it is considered that this is due to the fact it is a secure children's home and often deals with the most challenging young people who are unhappy with their situation. Examples of the complaints received by Kyloe House staff and their resolution are below:

Issue	Resolution
Young person states they heard a staff member swear.	Although this is not a common occurrence this was raised at the staff meeting.
Young person complained staff did not explain their actions fully.	Discussion had with the individual staff member to explain the reasons for actions.
Young person accused of taking an item from the art class.	Young person apologised too when item was found not in their possession.
Young person complaining their peers make a mess.	The complainant helped to produce a poster to encourage tidiness on the unit.

2.8 The complaints received at Phoenix House related to internal resident disputes and after investigation all were Not Upheld. The complaint received at Thorndale was also Not Upheld following investigation but there was evidence of good practice in that notifications were made to the social worker and LADO, with the young person being offered further support from advocacy services. This ensured the young person's voice was clearly heard and evidenced.

## 2.9 Formal Complaints recorded

2.10 Of the 36 complaints received during 2020/21; 4 social care were refused. Reasons for not progressing or refusing a complaint include the relevant child/young person being the subject of a concurrent investigation such as court proceedings (Regulation 8) or being outside the 12 month timescale for making a complaint (Regulation 9). A complaint can also be refused if there is a more appropriate, alternate process such as a statutory appeal or Tribunal.

2.11 Of the 32 complaints that were accepted and then progressed:

- 2 are ongoing, progressed to Stage 2
- 1 was stopped as the young person withdrew consent for the adult to deal with the complaint on their behalf and stated they did not want the complaint to progress

- 1 was stopped and referred to LADO process
- 8 were partially upheld
- 5 were fully upheld; and
- 15 of these complaints were not upheld

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

### **2.13 Complaint response timescales**

2.14 At Stage 1 children's social care complaints, in accordance with statutory requirements, should be responded to within 10 working days, with an extension to 20 working days in certain circumstances. For the 2021/22 year where 29 social care complaints were accepted and taken forward, the response figures are as below:

- 11 were responded to within 10 working days
- 12 were responded to within 20 working days
- 6 took over 20 working days to respond to

2.15 This demonstrates that 79% of social care complaints were responded to within statutory timescales. Of the remaining 4 that went over timescales, further extensions were agreed with the complainant and were necessary due to the arrangement of meetings with the complainant to agree a suitable way forward in terms of remedy.

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

2.17 For the 2021/22 year 7 corporate complaints were accepted and progressed. 6 were responded to within the 15 working days. Where more time was required beyond the 15 working days this was agreed and communicated with the complainant.

2.18 This demonstrates that 85.7% were responded to within the council agreed corporate procedure.

2.19 Further work will be undertaken this year around the timescales for response at stage 1 of both complaints processes to ensure improvements are made wherever possible.

### **2.20 Complaints at Stage 2**

2.21 At Stage 2, statutory legislation states that an independent investigation should be undertaken. The Council commission the services of an independent investigation officer (IIO) and independent person (IP) who look into the complaint, review records, interview involved officers and consider council policies/procedures. They

then analyse their findings and provide outcomes to the Council in a report for the Council to consider and adjudicate.

- 2.22 Legislation states that complaints at this stage should be responded to within 25 working days or 65 working days depending on complexity. All complaints at stage 2 within Northumberland have been extended to the maximum 65 working day timeframe due to various issues including complexity of the complaint, the number and availability of staff to be interviewed, contact having to be made with former employees, availability of complainants and the investigating officers.
- 2.23 2 complaints recorded in 2021/22 have been escalated to Stage 2 and are currently ongoing.
- 2.24 5 stage 2 complaint investigations were ongoing at the time of the new financial year and were carried over.

### **2.25 Complaints Escalated to Stage 3 - Review Panels**

- 2.26 1 complaint received during 2021/22 progressed to Stage 3 Review Panel, however, a further 3 have been held during 2021/22 which resulted from escalation of complaints carried forward from the previous year.
- 2.27 The purpose of the Review Panel is to consider the standard and quality of investigation undertaken at Stage 2, highlight any problems in that investigation and to provide the complainant with an opportunity for further reconsideration of their complaint points. The Review Panel can offer further suggestion on remedy for the Council to consider.
- 2.28 Review Panels should be held within 30 working days of request but this has proved difficult to achieve due to the conflicting diary availability of all those involved. Although all the Review Panels were held outside the 30 working day time, all dates were negotiated and agreed with the complainants and their support/representatives.
- 2.29 Review Panel notes must be provided within 5 working days of the Panel meeting. A final letter from the Council must then be provided by the Director of Children's Services within 15 working days to respond to the Panel findings and recommendations. On all 4 occasions, these statutory timeframes have been met.

## **3. External Review**

### **3.1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

- 3.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) look at complaints about Local Authorities once a complaint has completed all stages of the Local Authority complaint process. If a complaint has not been considered by a Local Authority, the LGSCO will usually refer it back to the Authority to look into and class this as a "premature" complaint. They are independent of all Government departments and have the same powers as the High Court to obtain information

and documents. If they find the Authority has done something wrong they will make recommendations to put things right.

- 3.3 The LGSCO produce an Annual Letter in relation to every Local Authority to indicate how many complaints have been received during the year, with the outcome of each complaint and an indication of how each Local Authority has performed. All information can be found via

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

- 3.4 The 2021/22 Annual Letter provides general feedback to every Council which covers all departmental complaints they have looked at. In relation to Children's Services the LGSCO received 12 complaints and have issued 10 decision notices; 3 complaints were Upheld; 3 were closed after initial enquiries; 4 were referred back to NCC for consideration (known as premature referral to the LGSCO); 2 remain under investigation.
- 3.5 Of the 3 complaints that were Upheld; the LGSCO were satisfied that NCC had already appropriately remedied 1 of the complaints. The remedies recommended by the LGSCO in relation to the remaining 2 complaints were accepted and implemented.
- 3.6 In their Annual Letter, the LGSCO has praised Northumberland County Council for displaying "a positive culture about the benefits of responding to and learning from complaints".
- 3.7 The LGSCO additionally urge Councils to "consider how your organisation prioritises complaints, particularly in terms of capacity and visibility. Properly resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members are capable of providing valuable insight about an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery."

#### **4. Categorisation of Complaints**

- 4.1 When complaints are recorded, the Client Relations Team assess and determine the nature of the complaint and what the content relates to. At the present time the complaints can only be allocated one category, however, a number of the complaints involve more categories and it is hoped that future system changes will support improved intelligence gathering.
- 4.2 The following table indicates how the complaints were categorised according to the content and nature of the complaint being made.

Category	Number
Communications/Information	7
Delay in Service	2

Failure to follow policy/procedure	0
Standard of service	9
Staff manner/attitude	2
Breach of confidentiality	4
policy	0
Issue with social worker	3
Disagree with officer decision	5

4.3 Standard of service has been the biggest categorisation of complaints, however, this includes complaints where there are maybe several issues being considered and they cannot all be categorised individually. Of the 9 complaints categorised as standard of service, only 1 was upheld in full with a further 3 being partially upheld.

## 5. Lessons Learned

- 5.1 Children's Services embrace the opportunities provided by the collation of feedback from service users whether positive or negative and use it to feed into continual service improvement. Complaints are very much part of that and any learning identified from the investigation of a complaint is considered and taken forward in the most appropriate way.
- 5.2 To make sure required learning is embedded into practice, a quarterly report is now provided to the Children's Service leadership team who consider the identified points of learning and decide on the best way for this to be taken forward. This could be in the form of team training or amendments to policy/practice.
- 5.3 The issue of complaints/feedback is now a standard item on team meeting agendas to make sure there is discussion and learning taken from not only the outcomes of complaints but the complaint management, handling and investigation also.
- 5.4 Examples of the lessons learned can be seen below:

Complaint	Outcome/lesson learned
Concerns over sharing of detail in relation to those who make referrals into Children's Service regarding child concerns. Complainant advised mother of child, who they made a referral about via a third party had been informed that they made the referral. Mother arrived at their door "kicking off" causing upset to another child present in the home of the referrer. Complainant advised that their child	Work undertaken with the Information Governance Team in relation to referral process and how this information should be shared with families. Information Governance working with social care teams about what information should and shouldn't be shared to reduce risk to others. Financial remedy provided to one of the complainants.

<p>babysat for a neighbour's baby and during this, noticed issues of concern around the child's wellbeing. Complainant on behalf of their child reported to children's services. Their details were shared by social worker leading to aggressive confrontation and threats from child's mother.</p>	
<p>Concerns over sharing email contacts via Teams invitations. Complainant advised that their email address had been shared with their former abuser in a domestic abuse case.</p>	<p>Work undertaken with IT and Information Governance to find suitable resolution to hide all email addresses from Teams invites to avoid any potential confidentiality breaches and protect those at risk from domestic abuse.</p>
<p>Complaints from Special Guardian in relation to historical payments and lack of annual review.</p>	<p>Review of special guardianship policy is underway.</p>
<p>Complaint regarding delays in adoption process and experience of potential adopter. Adopter felt they had "jumped through hoops" to comply with all requirements of council to ensure the adoption could go through. Towards the end of the process, due to a problem with the delay in the process, they were told they had "breached" the requirements by booking a holiday before the process was complete during what they described as an upsetting contact. Adopter felt this was inappropriate at a stressful time and caused considerable distress.</p>	<p>Complaint was partially upheld. Complainant is providing the Council with an impact statement that can be used for staff training event to raise awareness of how language can create negativity.</p>

## 6. Summary

- 6.1 Response times at Stage 1 are improving but work is required again to try and ensure that responses are provided, wherever possible, within the 10 working days timeframe rather than having to extend.
- 6.2 Work is also to be undertaken in relation to officers investing more time at the early Stage 1 investigation point, to try and improve their understanding of the complaint issue and achieve resolution more quickly for the customers.
- 6.3 Lessons learned will remain the focus of Children's Services to make sure service provision is continually reviewed and improved moving forward. This supports the ethos and focus of both OFSTED and the LGSCO. In addition to complaint and enquiry information, the department will be looking at compliments received in order to capture where there are examples of good practice and promote these within the department.

- 6.4 In the forthcoming year, the Client Relations Team will be working to make improvements to the training provided to officers and others including Elected Members in relation to complaint investigations and the capturing of learning and feedback.
- 6.5 **Further information regarding complaints**
- 6.6 Should further information be required in relation to any aspect of this report or the handling of children's social care complaints, please do not hesitate to contact the Complaints Manager for Children's Services on 01670 628888 or via email [clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:clientrelations@northumberland.gov.uk)
- 6.7 Information can also be found on the Council website [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Complaints contribute to monitoring the impact of the Council's policies and the effectiveness with which they are being implemented.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no direct implications.
<b>Legal</b>	There are no direct legal implications although arrangements are in place to ensure that if complaints suggest that someone is being abused, or a crime may have been committed, there is an appropriate response.
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no direct implications, however, Stage 2 independent complaint investigations require the commissioning of independent officers to undertake the works. This is currently done through a regional NEPO arrangement.
<b>Human Resources</b>	There are no direct implications.
<b>Property</b>	There are no direct implications.
<b>Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>	There are no direct implications.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Individual complaints are risk-assessed on receipt, and appropriate actions are taken if someone is at immediate risk of harm.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	Arrangements are in place to ensure that if complaints suggest that someone is being abused, or a crime may have been committed, there is an appropriate response.
<b>Customer Considerations</b>	Complaints are one of a range of methods by which we receive feedback on the quality and consistency of our services. They are also invaluable for learning lessons and quality improvement.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	There are no direct carbon reduction implications.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Our learning from complaints is used to continuously improve our services for the benefit of users of our services.
<b>Wards</b>	All



## **Background Papers**

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

## **Report Sign Off**

Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

## **Author and Contact Details**

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## Northumberland County Council

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

8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

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#### **Children's Social Care: Annual Self-Assessment**

Report of Graham Reiter, Joint Interim Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner-Thompson

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The report is to share the content and findings of the children's social care self-assessment. The self-assessment supports an evaluation of the progress and current practice in children's social care and identifies future actions to support the continuous improvement that is required as we strive to achieve our vision of being a service where meeting the needs of children, young people and families is the focus so that they get the best out of life.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. Members note the content of the report
2. Identify areas for scrutiny and clarification.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Living and Learning priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2021-2024.

#### **Key Issues**

1. The report is required by Ofsted and will form the basis of the annual conversation with them.
2. The report does evidence continuing improvements in the quality of practice, despite key ongoing challenges of workforce retention and increasing demand and highlights areas for further improvement and priorities for the continuous improvement plan for 2022/2023.

3. There are significant changes likely for children's social care in following years with the recent publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, a briefing on which will be provided separately for members.

## **Background**

Every year Ofsted arrange a conversation with all Local Authorities called an Annual Engagement meeting. At this meeting a self-assessment document is presented and forms the basis for that meeting, along with the outcomes of any inspections and any recent intelligence that Ofsted may have gained about the Authority. There is no date set at this point although we are expecting a focused visit from Ofsted at any time.

Further to this, as part of regional improvement work, there is a Director's Challenge in which three regional authorities provide challenge and scrutiny to each other's self-assessment which will take place in October.

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Children's Services do need to meet their statutory requirements and there is rigorous oversight of expenditure.
<b>Legal</b>	The provision of Children's social care is underpinned by legislation and regulation. This self-assessment is part of the oversight of CSC services by Ofsted the regulatory body.
<b>Procurement</b>	
<b>Human Resources</b>	Responses to the workforce recruitment and retention challenges are supported by HR.
<b>Property</b>	One element of future planning includes the building of new children's homes both to meet demand locally and to reduce expenditure on external placements.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	CSC work with, support, and safeguard the most vulnerable children in Northumberland.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Self-assessment is inherently a risk assessment and would flag areas of risk for the council and links to the overall corporate risk register.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The leadership pledge and the practice framework being embedded within CSC has effective engagement with children and families with whom we work at the centre of what we do.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	
<b>Wards</b>	

## Background Papers

### Annual Self-Assessment



CSC Self Assessment  
2021-22.docx

### Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

### Author and Contact Details

Graham Reiter: Joint Interim Director Children's Services  
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# Children's Social Care Self Assessment

July 2022

**Graham Reiter**

Interim Joint Director of Children's Services



[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

 Northumberland  
County Council

## Introduction

Our vision for Northumberland children's social care is to be a service where meeting the needs of children, young people and families is the focus so that they get the best out of life. Our leadership pledge highlights our commitment to challenge ourselves relentlessly to achieve continuous improvement in the quality and effectiveness of our services for children, young people, and their families. This annual self-assessment is a key feature of pulling together the range of ways in which we understand the quality of our practice and ensure that we put in place actions to further develop and continuously improve our services. We have coordinated the findings of our quality of practice work, used key performance information and more broadly encapsulated the findings and developments of our continuous improvement plan and linked strategies in the relevant sections of this self-assessment.

Within each of the sections, we have identified what we have done well, what we could do better, detailed the key evidence of the impact in that area of work and then highlighted actions to take forward in the continuous improvement plan for 2022-2023. This will also include areas of development arising from national direction and at the time of writing, there are key publications due in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the National Panel Review of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Holborn.

We do see through the range of ways in which we understand the quality of our practice, the dedication and commitment of our workforce who are our most valuable resource and continue to deliver effective services despite the significant and ongoing challenges that are faced.



Interim Joint Director of Children's Services

## Our evaluation of the top 4 improvement priorities 2021/22

PROGRESS	EVIDENCE OF IMPACT
<b>Strategic Leadership:</b>	
Quality of practice framework	Further developed and continuing improvement seen in the quality of practice.
Early Help and prevention	Improved performance on step ups, EHFV outcomes, First Time Entrants, avoiding need for the care system, and improving accommodation stability.
SEND CSC	The SEND pilot inspection was positive about the social care involvements in SEND work, including individual work with families, transitions and described Early Help as an "Incredible strength".
Corporate Parenting	Further developing Promises across the council with eight in place so far.
<b>National developments:</b>	
Case for Change	Staff engaged and NCC contribution made to consultation
Domestic Abuse	The Local Partnership Board has developed a strategy and action plan in line with the legal requirements and has supported the timely commissioning of services.
Liberty Protection Standards	Planning and preparation in place: Set up steering group to plan for 16/17-year-old requirements, identification of potential young people who may be impacted on and completed training with special school heads
<b>Workforce:</b>	
Workforce strategy	Workforce steering group in place supported by dashboard data highlights data to support the workforce priorities and progress against agreed actions.
Signs of Safety	Positive feedback from SoS HealthCheck with staff recognising the advantages of the model and how it was supporting their improved practice.
Recruitment & retention	Remains a challenge overall but ASYE academy is a strength and key for us
Learning from the pandemic	Maintained and reintroduced front-line services, sickness levels remaining within normal limits, and feedback from staff has been positive.
First line social work management	Team manager structure now well embedded, and staff have responded positively to smaller teams with clearer lines of accountability directly to one manager.
Staff surveys	Staff are satisfied with the terms, conditions, culture, and working environment, feel supported, and are impressed with the training and development offer.
<b>Placement sufficiency, stability and support:</b>	
Corporate parenting strategy	Multi agency groups developed to progress each of the priorities and strategy due for renewal 2022/23.
Placement sufficiency	Increasing capacity and flexibility with in-house fostering has been key to supporting increased placements. Delays on new builds unhelpful. Sufficiency remains a key challenge but no illegal unregistered placements for under 16 year olds made.
Placement support	Range of support and training in place for placements and carers.
National placement legislation & regulation	See placement sufficiency above
Virtual school action plan	Good progress in fulfilling the extended duty to promote the education of children with a social worker. Mid-year school moves have dropped as an impact of effective integrated working between the Virtual School, Children's Social Care and Family Placement
ANE	Increased adoption activity in the year and percentage exiting care for adoption above national average.
<b>Improving social care practice:</b>	
<b>Summary:</b> Overall, evidence of continuing improvement in the quality of practice and increased consistency from previous year. Areas for further improvement noted in content of self assessment.	
Neglect	Planned multi agency workshop on neglect
Public Law	Workshops around PLWG recommendations and best practices, implementing these into our PLO processes. The well-established Legal gateway panel expanded to include the psychologist and Virtual School to strengthen information sharing and decision making.
Consistency of recording	Recording is more consistent, structured more widely on SoS and includes views and experiences of children.

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

### 1.1 What have we done well in the last year?

We have maintained stability in the senior leadership team, embedding the restructure undertaken at the end of the previous year and we have further enhanced capacity with the development and appointment of a senior manager post with responsibility for CSC SEND delivery and partnership development. This has meant we have offered consistent leadership for our workforce and also further developed strategic and operational partnership working. Interim arrangements, which should provide continuity and stability, have been agreed to cover the DCS role when Cath McEvoy-Carr leaves with the current service directors for education and CSC jointly covering the role with the service director for CSC being the named DCS.

While core services of social work and residential care have been maintained throughout the pandemic, we have effectively and safely reintroduced the wider direct services over the last year, maintaining the virtual elements which have enhanced direct work while supporting a hybrid model of working for office-based staff.

In relation to the specific areas of strategic leadership development detailed in the continuous improvement plan, we can evidence progress in all those areas.



The early help strategy has been reviewed and updated and the development of Family Hubs, as required through the national Best Start in Life, is progressing well with effective partnership engagement. NCC are leading regional work and development in this area. Our work with Healthy Relationships continues to progress effectively. (See section on Early Help for evidence of impact and how we know).

We have made clear progress in relation to CSC work with children with SEND and their families, including strategic developments supported by the enhanced senior management capacity. See 1.3 below for evidence.

**Corporate Parenting:** This is a lead member priority in the revised corporate plan 2022. Work has been ongoing to develop Promises from services across the council to detail their offer for children looked after and care leavers with eight promises in place and others being progressed. Further work is being undertaken to evidence the impact of those promises and at the time of writing an audit is being undertaken of elected members to identify additional specific offers and support they could make.

**Work with health partners:** We have continued to work closely with colleagues in CCG, with the findings of the SEND revisit in relation to joint commissioning quoted below in 1.3. Further to this, there is a significant and exciting development and implementation of NEWST (Northumberland Emotional Well-being Support Team) comprising 2 psychologists and 4 EWB practitioners who are located and managed within our social work teams, coming into post in the last quarter of 2021/22. Further to this, we have maintained the CCG contribution of £1.1m for the

next year 2022/23 to our external placements. We have also gained agreement for CCG funding of a speech and language therapist post, also to sit within CSC.

### **National developments:**

**Independent review of children's social care:** While we await the publication of this due end of spring 2022, we have engaged staff through workshop dissemination and discussion of the interim report, and this supported a submission from Northumberland CC staff to the review.

**Domestic Abuse:** The service director for CSC chairs the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which has developed a strategy and action plan in line with the legal requirements and has supported the timely commissioning of a range of services using the allocated funding to meet the identified needs.

**Liberty Protection Standards (LPS):** Preparations are in place as far as possible with a steering group linked with adult services, responses will be made to the recently published draft code of practice for MCA, identification of potential young people impacted by the proposed changes and a training framework drafted. This group will be stood back up again nearer to the implementation of the Code which will be towards the end of 2023.



**Virtual school enhanced responsibilities:** Good progress has been made to fulfil the Virtual School Headteacher's extended duty to promote the education of children with a social worker. The project has 4 workstreams – Attendance, Behaviour, Wellbeing and Learning – that are working with Designated Safeguarding Leads and children's social workers to enhance professional relationships that will benefit school age children. Benchmark data has been agreed so that impact can be monitored and measured in the next 12 months.

**Financial:** CSC successfully gained growth in its funding for the year 2021/22 in light of the pressures and demand and have achieved the identified savings for the year.

### **1.2 What could we do better?**

We have initiated workstreams with corporate colleagues to further develop the technology to support hybrid working methods and this requires more time and resource investment to progress further

The progress of the builds of the new children's homes has still not progressed as quickly as hoped. The original capital funding agreed was insufficient to fund the builds in the current climate and we have successfully bid for DfE match funding to enhance that. Ground problems on an agreed site meant that this could not be progressed, and alternatives are being pursued, but building on another site is due to start in Autumn 2022.

### **1.3 What impact has this had and how do we know?**

**Moving from the pandemic:** Overall, we know our actions and responses have worked well, as we have maintained and reintroduced front-line services, have managed to respond to demand, and the levels of staff sickness have remained within normal limits. Further to this, feedback from

staff has been positive about the support that has been offered to them by management through and coming out of the pandemic.

**SEND:** The SEND revisit in May 2021 found:

*There has been significant improvement and a seismic change in leadership and culture since Northumberland's last area SEND inspection in October 2018. Practitioners no longer work in silos. They work collegiately to implement the requirements of 2014 SEND reforms. The partnership has reviewed and revitalised its strategy for children and young people with SEND.*

*SEND champions have been appointed to work within social care teams. They help raise awareness about the importance of early identification of children and young people with SEND by social workers. Referrals are made to multiagency teams who are ensuring that children and young people's needs are met and their outcomes are improving.*

*Joint commissioning is embedded firmly across all aspects of education, health and social care.*

Further to this, informal and verbal feedback given by inspectors as a result of the SEND pilot undertaken in Northumberland in March 2022 confirmed that early help and prevention in CSC was an "incredible strength", that children and families benefited from having a social worker/early help worker and that the transitions from children to adult social care was a strength. Inspectors indicated that we know ourselves well.

**Corporate Parenting:** There is increased visibility and ownership across the council of corporate parenting as evidenced by the Promises and more specifically, the engagement of partners directly in EET clinics for our children looked after and care leavers is detailed in the later section with evidence of improving EET figures for care leavers.

#### **1.4 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?**

Maximise the use of the recently notified supported families funding to further enhance the range and effectiveness of early help services.

Develop impact measures to understand the effectiveness of directorate and business corporate parenting promises and the offers from elected members.

As part of partnership developments, integrate the adult and children's safeguarding partnerships, further implement the Family Hub developments and as part of these developments, map and streamline the range of partnership governance arrangements to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. More widely, ensure effective engagement with the regional ICS developments to ensure children are central to this and to maintain the positive work and developments we have achieved with the CCG.

Preparation for registration and regulation of independent and semi-independent living arrangements.

Response to the independent review of CSC and the national panel review of Arthur and Star when published and ensure appropriate developments from SEND green paper.

## QUALITY OF PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

### 1.5 What have we done well in the last year?

Key to achieving our vision, are effective performance management and quality assurance processes which underpin our continuous improvement and our ongoing development as a learning organisation. The focus and depth of our quality of practice is driven in the work of QPAG where all quality of practice findings are presented, improving how the learning from quality of practice work reaches front line staff in a meaningful and embedded way by enhancing the communication flow from QPAG to CSMs to Team Managers to Practitioners.

The work of QPAG and the supporting quality of practice processes continue to focus on developing the quality and effectiveness of practice and oversight while maintaining the necessary monitoring of compliance. This includes:

- Using data on compliance to improve quality. For example: by reviewing data on assessments in timescale and evaluating through audit how they are written and what they mean for the families. Another example: by looking at data on SoS methods used within each worker's caseloads, managers can identify gaps where workers may need further support.
- Our understanding of how children and families experience services has been broadened through the development of dashboards such as Early Help Meaningful Measures, parental relationships, legal tracking, SEND learners with a social worker, NEWST, and Northumberland Families First.
- We have continued to make effective use of activity and performance data trends for discussion at QPAG to agree the course of action, e.g., ongoing scrutiny of our thresholds, short term placement stability, changes in numbers of children in care.
- Geographical data being used to look at correlations between deprivation and children entering care or who are subject to child protection plans; to assist managers in visiting families in the most efficient method; and to target distinct areas where clinics identified the need for improvement.
- Through use of Tableau, we have further developed our integration of datasets from different systems. For example, to understand the experiences of children looked after with regards stability of their placements, schools, and social workers and to identify those children and young people who are potentially at risk of exploitation (Next Wave).
- Signs of Safety now being embedded into the system, with the vast majority of key forms reflecting the SoS practice. The introduction of a committed Quality of Practice Lead has enabled a real focus on continuing to ensure that Northumberland operate as a learning organisation.
- An original approach has been taken in terms of user training on the system. Bite sized videos are now available for workers, they have been well received and will aid in improving the quality of case recording.

The elements of focus regarding quality of practice will be outlined within the Quality of Practice Framework which will be completed in June 2022. These include:

- Practice Days
- Audits, this includes standard audits, early help audits and themed audits.
- Voice of children, young people, and families
- Feedback from other agencies
- Feedback from frontline practitioners
- Learning from practice reviews

- Data reporting
- Learning from complaints and compliments
- Findings from inspections
- Staff supervisions and appraisals
- Performance clinics and quarterly performance meetings

As part of working under the auspices of Signs of Safety, Northumberland have developed five Meaningful Measures to look at quality of practice and impact, developing the use of data and quality of practice findings in Performance Clinics. By counting what counts, we strive to make sure that we are aware what difference we are making to the children, young people, and their families in Northumberland.

## 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.

### 1.6 What could we do better?

- Whilst we have implemented monthly reporting from the LIFT finance module, technical difficulties with the data warehouse and delays to the ICS upgrade have been a barrier meaning that it is only now that we are able to write our own customised reports. These are being designed with senior managers and will add value to Liquidlogic's off the shelf reports. Overall, though, progress with project implementation is on track.
- Report more widely on the scaling data now available for specific points of the child's journey, for example by incorporating it into our reporting to the new NCASP arrangements.
- In liaison with Liquidlogic and NCC I.T. services, we must reduce the amount of system downtime and workarounds that frontline staff have been asked to do recently.

### 1.7 What impact has this had and how do we know?

The meaningful measures are being used in performance clinics, and dashboards are continuing to be developed to better reflect the impact of working with children, young people and families and what difference this makes to their lives. From the quality of practice activity that has been undertaken between July 2021 and April 2022 (5 practice days, 2 quarterly early help findings, 2



standard audits and 12 themed audits (one of which was multi agency) to date all of which have been presented to QPAG), the salient points have been highlighted under each of the meaningful measure headings, and these are outlined in the impact sections within the practice sections.

## Overall Summary of Practice

Overall, there has been evidence of continuing improvement in the quality of practice seen in all activities. In the previous report it was highlighted that there was a need for more consistency in application of standards and during this period, this has been evidenced, improvement has been noted and practice is more consistent across all areas of children's social care in Northumberland. The consistency of recording has also improved but requires ongoing focus to ensure all good practice and impact is evidenced. . The increased quality of practice activity in this period and the dedication and commitment of workforce members to ensure good outcomes for children and young people threads through the practice. The move to the quality of practice being supported by QPAG has continued to focus on improvement in practice and what this means for children and their families.

All quality of practice activity outlines relevant recommendations, in striving for continuous improvement, and reports are shared with all staff across the service. These recommendations are accepted by the group and at times, further quality of practice work is identified and scheduled. These recommendations should form part of future performance meetings for relevant parts of the service and actions should be added to locality action logs for reviewing. This process is currently in its embryonic stages and needs further development.

More examples, developments, and impacts below and are further detailed where relevant in other sections:

- From the increased focus on placement stability through the CLA Stability Task and Finish group, the deteriorating figures have been reversed (see findings in the CLA / Care Leavers section).
- Through the Meaningful Measures Performance Clinics, CSMs are seeing better communication and engagement with families. Scaling data facilitates more meaningful discussions with workers about the progress being made on a plan, where the views may vary between parents and professionals.
- By using geographical data to target distinct areas, there has been a significant increase in sustained engagement (see findings in the Early Help section).
- By using data to improve consistency of recording, the proportion of EHFWS cases closing where the outcomes were successful and the proportion of 17 and 18-year-old care leavers with their 'in touch' activity information recorded has increased significantly (see findings in the Early Help and CLA / Care Leavers sections).
- Within permanence performance clinics, the dashboard has helped to identify actions to improve the timeliness of permanence for our CLA, including timely discharge from care where appropriate. This is reflected in the reduction of children looked after in the last 12 months (see findings in the CLA / Care leavers section).
- Through ongoing scrutiny of our thresholds, we are reassured that we are applying them appropriately and not intervening unnecessarily (see findings in the Front Door / Help and Protection section).
- Through the LIFT financial payments system, care providers are receiving more accurate and timely payment and the need for follow up work is significantly reduced, demonstrating the effectiveness of the project implementation.

## 1.8 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?

Work with software and network providers to reduce system downtime

We need to enhance the suite of training/reference bite sized videos available, whilst increasing the use of virtual clinics for staff to address recording concerns.

There is a need to improve the client systems to record areas of work that we do not capture at present. For example, a new workspace for Domestic Abuse and the Mental Health Capacity Act.

Whilst the quality of practice activity has been increased in this period, there has been some learning from the process of introducing themed audits and this learning will be taken forward in the trajectory for future activity. Our overall audit processes involve discussions with staff and families where possible and the use of the specific SoS collaborative audit is in its embryonic stages and being piloted to determine the added value of using it.

The implementation of QPAG has evidenced improvements in the coordination and effectiveness of our processes and has given us a good picture of where our strengths are and we want this to be further developed. The trajectory of further quality of practice activity and the launching and implementation of the Quality of Practice Framework will further strengthen the overall understanding of the impact of practice on children and their families.

## WORKFORCE STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

### 1.9 What have we done well in the last year?

Our workforce are our most valuable asset and we continue to prioritise and invest in the recruitment, retention, and development of our staff. We recognise that the best possible service can only be delivered to children and their families if we attract, maintain and upskill high calibre staff.

Our workforce strategy has been updated to reflect key priorities and used to underpin a workforce action plan which is overseen by a workforce steering group. The group includes representatives from HR, Social Care, performance, L&D, and communications to drive forward the initiatives in relation to the workforce.

The building blocks of our workforce begin with our strong links with the local Universities. We have continued to offer student placements throughout the pandemic and have commenced a pilot project with Northumbria University with one team manager supporting a cohort of 5 students in placements with link workers, completing their practice educator awards. If successful, this is a model we will replicate further to enhance our offer to students and support staff to complete their Practice Educators award.

We are an active member of the regional teaching partnership NESWA (North East Social Work Alliance) and have worked with universities promoting Northumberland as an employer for new graduates. Our ASYE academy continues to flourish and is being adopted across the region as a template of best practice. During 2021/22 we have had 17 newly qualified social workers join Northumberland through the academy route and a cohort of a further 16 are recruited to commence in September 2022.



Graduation Day 2022 at the ASYE Academy

During 2021/22 we have developed an induction SharePoint site that guides new starters to all the information that they will require and provides a point of reference for all staff. We have continued to develop a mixed economy of entry routes into social work. The first cohort of social work apprentices will graduate in June 2022 and a further 12 apprentices are pursuing their social work degree through this route. All the apprentices have been selected from our unqualified staff, thereby promoting professional development for our whole workforce. We continue to promote step up to social work as a program with 2 students in placement at present.

Recruitment of experienced workers continues to be a challenge and we are exploring innovative and more wide-reaching ways to advertise positions and promote Northumberland as an employer. The issue has been highlighted corporately and we are engaging other council directorates in our recruitment planning. We are learning from improved exit, and new starter interviews about what attracts staff to join or leads them to leave Northumberland and use this feedback to plan our workforce strategy.

Our use of agency workers is low and reducing (falling from 12.3% in qtr 1 to 8.5% by qtr 4) and of those in post a considerable number have been in positions for more than 1 year.

Our training and CPD offer to staff is strong and based on consultation and an annual training needs analysis. Signs of Safety training for all staff has been provided commensurate with their needs and we are now confident that all staff have had opportunities to familiarise themselves with the principles of the practice model. This training is constantly reviewed to reflect needs and reinforce areas where further input is required.

Signs of Safety training is complemented by workshops, development sessions with practice champions, how-to guides and sharing of best practice examples, and one-to-one support from the SOS practice leads. This input has enhanced the consistent application of the model as evidenced in practice days and audits.

The PAM's (parenting assessment for parents with learning difficulties or additional needs) team which was created last year is now well established and undertakes all assessments for the service (56 to date). An evaluation of this team, incorporating feedback from families, the legal team and social workers clearly evidences the positive impact on families and care planning for children with parents who have additional needs.

The social work team manager structure has been revised to create smaller teams, thereby increasing the accountability for managers, and improving management oversight of casework. Without exception staff report that they feel supported by their line managers and feel confident and safe in their practice when dealing with complex cases. At the Front Door the team managers are now accountable for a discrete group of workers which has created consistency for workers in the oversight of their assessments.

The role and functions of business support staff who are so crucial to the delivery of efficient services are currently being reviewed to ensure the best use of this valuable resource and a consistent offer to teams. The aim is to support front-line workers and allow them to spend more time working directly with children.

Lessons have been learned from the flexible working arrangements that were introduced as a response to covid and now as we are returning to the office have retained some of the practices that enhanced the service offer to create a hybrid way of working that supports staff health and wellbeing as well as providing the most responsive service to children and families.

### **1.10 What could we do better?**

Staff turnover is higher than we would like it to be (ranging from 15.8% in qtr 1 to 18.9% in qtr 4) and we are considering a range of retention incentives to stabilise the workforce. Our preference would be to consider professional development opportunities and differential career grades rather than financial benefits to support and develop excellent practice and practitioners.

Recruitment of qualified, skilled staff continues to present a challenge to Northumberland in common with other Local Authorities regionally and nationally. We engage with regional initiatives to address the issues and are actively considering how we approach recruitment corporately, but we do need to broaden our reach and re-energise our adverts to attract staff to work in Northumberland. There are some unique selling points that we need to actively promote to replenish the workforce.

We need to consider and implement effective retention opportunities to stabilise the workforce and reduce turnover to improve the consistency of worker and services offered to children.

### **1.11 What impact has this had and how do we know?**

The impact of the activity and progress in relation to the workforce is quality assured using our meaningful measure framework, specifically meaningful measure 5.

#### **Meaningful Measure 5 – Offer the right training and supervision to improve confidence, skills, and knowledge of workers**

Supervision is offered to workers on a regular basis and Team Managers are skilled in the undertaking of supervision and the robust recording of supervision using the Signs of Safety methodology which drives the plan for the child and their family. There has been some learning identified in this area with regards to consistency and the use of timescales to better focus the worker however overall staff reported feeling well supported (especially over the period of the pandemic) and able to approach managers and senior managers.

Practice days have been useful to communicate with staff, even though virtual, and the evidence is outstanding that they know their children well, want good outcomes for them and that they are

working 'with' families as opposed to 'doing to' families. There have been some amazing pieces of work with children highlighted across the service and 'learning from complaints and compliments' has highlighted that as well as some complaints having been received where the learning is shared across the service, several compliments have been received and recorded regarding workers' involvement with families, all of which indicates the calibre of our staff in Northumberland.

Recent feedback has been given regarding an NFF worker which clearly highlights some of the impact of the involvement from the worker as follows:

- ***"I would just like to express my upmost appreciation and thanks from bottom of my heart for the work and support from an absolute star and a credit to your service."***

Staff have access to a wide range of learning materials. Including Community Care Inform, good practice examples and tri x as well as access to statutory and mandatory training and training in other subject matter. New staff that have joined us in the pandemic have still been offered a comprehensive induction and despite vacancy rates across the Service, quality of practice activity has continued to identify positive practice in all areas.

A workforce dashboard has been developed to highlight data to support the workforce priorities regarding sickness, turnover, agency rates, and training attendance which informs the workforce steering group on progress against agreed actions.

The success of the academy is evident in the number of applications that we receive each time we advertise for a new cohort. The feedback from applicants indicates why they are attracted to the Northumberland model and what we offer.

***"Placement confirmed what I thought Northumberland would be and this is where I wanted to be all along, because of the Academy."***

Consequently, we are in an excellent position of selecting the best workers from a strong pool of candidates.

Feedback from exit interviews provides information about why staff have decided to move and one of the key messages from this information is in respect of career opportunities and grading which we are exploring to provide an improved and more attractive offer.

Staff tell us through the corporate staff survey and the Principal Social workers survey that they are satisfied with the terms, conditions, culture, and working environment in Northumberland, and they feel supported and are impressed with the training and development offer. There has been a raft of supports offered during the pandemic which staff report have been appreciated and sickness rates have fallen throughout the year to a point where they are now below the council average for the first time in many years (3.2% compared to 4.5%).

Very recently we have commissioned an independent Signs of Safety health check to evaluate the alignment of the IT system and practice and staff perception of the application and value of the practice model. The feedback was largely positive with staff reporting that they recognised the advantages of the model and were pleased with how it was supporting their improved practice.

***"There was a strongly expressed commitment to using Signs of safety across all services. Workers spoke positively about the way it had made a difference to their***

***relationships with families and the improvements that they could see in the outcomes for children”***

Our overall quality of practice findings are threaded through the self-assessment and the turnover of social workers is much higher than we would want. This does mean more changes of worker for children and families than we would want and we have included specific consideration of this in our quality of practice work. We have found that the changes of workers have not significantly delayed the overall progress of work due to consistent management oversight and specific actions where there have been delays have been subsequently progressed.

**1.12 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?**

We know our workforce well, we seek their views, and we feel confident in the academy model to replenish the workforce with high calibre newly qualified social work staff. We also know that we need to focus on:

- Redesigning the career pathway and grading structure to retain staff who wish to progress professionally.
- Sustaining the SoS training offer, reinforcing the role of practice champions, and embedding the SoS skill matrix into supervision and appraisal
- Broaden and re-energise our recruitment campaign to attract a more diverse range of experienced applicants
- Implement the new admin structure to support front line practitioners.

## CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

### 2. HELP AND PROTECTION

#### EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION

##### 2.1 What have we done well in the last year?

Over the last year we have continued to develop the range of early help services available within the constraints placed upon us by the pandemic. The joined-up approach in our First Contact service has enabled many children and families to be supported at an early help level without needing to step up to social work interventions.

For young children we have remodelled our prevention and intervention pathway working with health and education partners ensuring it is even more evidence based and supports ongoing pathways into other more specialised services such as speech and language therapy and portage where needed.

The recommissioning of our domestic abuse service offer for victims has allowed us to move the group domestic abuse programmes over to be delivered by that specialist service. This has created capacity for early help practitioners to be trained to deliver Healthy Relationships programmes for parents and close relatives creating a sustainable offer going forward.

Our out of court disposal process has continued to grow and develop supported by the police and other partners allowing us to work with more young people outside the youth justice arena; our first-time entrant numbers have increased from the year previously but are still one of the lowest in the region. This has been supported by the detached youth work offer working with other parts of the adolescent service to target areas highlighted for anti-social behaviour.

We have piloted a 'Team Around the School' early help clinic model with four secondary schools using a multi-agency partnership approach. This has been well received.

We have continued to develop strong integrated working, established during the pandemic, between Education Welfare, Early Help and Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools. Although not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, school attendance is stable and has improved and is mostly in line with current national averages.

We have continued to develop our response to children with emotional health needs with our health and education partners. This has included:

- Agreeing the co-location of Primary Mental Health Teams with our early help family work teams.
- Supporting the development of Children's Wellbeing Practitioner posts from within children's social care.
- With the CCG funding developing the secondment of a team of mental health practitioners (NEWST) to be based with our children's social work teams (noted in an earlier section).
- Providing supervision for the newly created ASD family support work posts based within the Inclusive Education Service.

We are opening up children's centre buildings (soon to be Family Hub buildings) and we have progressed the colocation with partners such as midwifery and 0-19 public health services to support our integrated pathway development.

Our edge of care service, Northumberland Families First, continues to be strong and delivers positive outcomes for the families it works with.

Our accommodation service has continued to work with housing and partners to implement the multi-agency joint housing protocol to prevent 16/17-year-old homelessness and through using early help assessments (EHAs) to work with families to identify solutions which can support the young person to remain living with family.

## 2.2 What could we do better?

Our youth service development has been hampered by Covid which has limited how well we have been able to develop the targeted preventative offer and demonstrate its effectiveness.

We know that the pandemic has impacted on our visibility in communities over the last two years and we need to work hard to re-engage families in our services as our buildings become fully open again.

We know that we need to continue to work hard with our schools and education providers to support their understanding of the early help offer and their role in this.

Capacity for all multi agency services working within the early help and prevention arena continues to be a challenge and we need to work on how we integrate further to ensure that we make best use of resources when working with families.

We need to further develop our data sharing systems and processes better to be able to identify needs across different services and agencies.

## 2.3 What impact has this had and how do we know?

Our performance data tells us that children and families who access support through our early help processes, and services are supported well at that level and where an early help family worker is involved, we know the majority have their outcomes met:

The 2021/22 average figures tell us:

- A low number of EHAs were subsequently stepped up to social work after 12 months: 18% in 2021/22 and 16% in 2020/21.
- Very few EH support requests subsequently stepped up to social work after 12 months: 12% in 2021/22 and 13% in 2020/21.
- More EH Family Work cases resulted in successful outcomes on closure: 75% in 2021/22 compared to 72% in 2020/21.

Through our early help audit activity, practice days and meaningful measure performance clinics we know that the quality of practice in utilising the Signs of Safety model is strong and is supporting families to identify their needs and outcomes to be achieved. We know that families tell us they benefit from and value the support given through the early help family work service.

Our performance data tells us that we have continued to improve the percentage of families from our most deprived areas having sustained engagement with our children's centres from 9% in



April 2021 to 47% by March 2022 and that the vast majority who attend our prevention and intervention pathway groups achieve the outcomes set: **95%**

Our First-time entrant rate, although increased from during the pandemic has only gone up by 3% to 94 per 100,000 from the period Oct 20-Sept 21 which is the lowest in the Northumbria police force area.

Young people and parents through feedback have told us that they are happy with the support they have received around accommodation:

***“We are both very satisfied with the support and help given particularly by A..., E.. seems happy with the progress and content that she will ultimately have her own place but that it will happen in a planned way.”***

***“xxx is happy for the EHA to end as she has sufficient support from her key worker at Places for People.”***

Only 14% of children who have been supported by Northumberland Families First have gone on to be looked after in the following 12 months-this is a reduction of 4% from the previous year.

Of the 40 young people supported through the Joint Housing Protocol, 34 have been supported into either remaining in their current housing arrangement or into a planned move on.

## **2.4 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?**

We are going to develop an Early Help Education support team based with our First Contact early help team. They will further develop and support the Team Around the School model and support schools to complete an early help assessment and plan for children where they are best placed to take the lead.

We will continue to develop the Family Hub model as the overarching model for early help and prevention services within Northumberland for children 0-19 and their families. This will include the ending of our current commissioning arrangements in part of the county and the further and ongoing integration of services across the VCS, health, education, police and other partners.

Further develop our continuum offer for relationships from relationship conflict through to domestic abuse; this will be done through the development and delivery of healthy relationships programmes by our internal services and working with the newly commissioned domestic abuse services. We will embed a pathway of referral which incorporates appropriate risk assessments to ensure that parents are signposted to the right level of support.

## **SAFEGUARDING / FRONT DOOR**

### **2.5 What have we done well in the last year?**

The Signs of Safety model has been firmly embedded in the practice at the front door and across the safeguarding teams. This is evident in audit and practice days which illustrate the use of clear, jargon-free language, networks, danger statements and safety plans, and direct work with young people. Staff report increased confidence in the use of the model and can see the benefits in their relationships with families and outcomes for children.

This process has been supported by a well-established and comprehensive training offer, supplemented by workshops, best practice clinics, 'how-to' guides, and support from 2 full-time practice leads. A SoS board has overseen all aspects of the process coordinating systems, training, practice, quality assurance, and partnerships resulting in clear and evidenced improvements in front line practice.

The team manager structure referenced in the workforce section is now well embedded, and staff have responded positively to smaller teams with clearer lines of accountability directly to one manager.

The MASH has been independently reviewed to evaluate progress since its' inception in 2018. This review illustrated some variance in the understanding of the role of the MASH and made recommendations about how the use of the MASH could be further strengthened and further enhance joint responsibility. The operational and strategic MASH groups are now overseeing the application of the recommendations.

While the overall numbers of children subject to a child protection plan has increased over the year from 359 to 389, our quality of practice work has evidenced that the decision making, and application of thresholds is appropriate. Child protection conferences are consistently held in a timely way (see section 2.7 below).

Effective responses to and understanding of exploitation and extra familial harm are strong in NAS, with constructive partnership work evident. In 2021, we achieved an increase in young people accepting their offer of a Return Home Interview with a 13% increase from 75% to 88% between October 2021 and May 2022. While exploitation is well understood across social care, further work needs to be undertaken to ensure consistent understanding of the range of issues which constitute extra familial harm across all teams.

Numbers of young people discussed in MSET have reduced in the last 12 months and those that are re-presenting is extremely low (averaging just 7% in 2021). This is a result of strengthened pre-meet procedures which allow us to intervene earlier and provide support to young people's plans to ensure they are SMART and exploitation focused.

A review of the local authority responses to extra familial harm has been commissioned which will be shared with the wider partnership on its completion which is due in June 2022.

We have broadened agency involvement in the monthly Children missing education (CME) tracking panel which has had a positive impact on re-engaging and safeguarding children not in school. New representation includes schools that can therefore use the system to identify children at risk of or subject to sexual exploitation, and/or criminal exploitation, and then make timely referrals to early help or children's social care where appropriate. Integration with other risk management processes, such as child protection, MSET and Operation Endeavour, are also achieved through the panel.

We have maintained the same level of service for children that are electively home educated, despite the significant rise in numbers over the last two years. We have been more robust in our use of School Attendance Orders for parents who are not providing a suitable education and are actively tracking 66 Year 11 pupils with the Skills, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning team to ensure they all have a pathway into education, training and employment from September.

We have increased capacity in the disabled children's team to reflect a wider eligibility criteria. Where families of disabled children have been unable to access assessed services the team have responded creatively to put other packages in place to alleviate stress eg caravan fees paid for, cleaners costs agreed.

The development of NEWST, the new emotional well-being team has been noted earlier in the self-assessment.

## 2.6 What could we do better?

Generally, across all safeguarding teams improved staff stability would support more consistent service delivery. Workforce challenges are the key to ensuring that the teams can function effectively.

We have struggled to consistently meet assessed need for disabled children and their families as a result of significant staff recruitment issues in care agencies and our commissioned short break service. This is a national issue but is putting significant strain on families.

## 2.7 What impact has this had and how do we know?

Key findings from our Quality of Practice work in this area are highlighted below

### **Meaningful Measure 1- keeping children safe, supported, and improving their lives.**

There is good application of thresholds and children are receiving the right service at the right time. Referrals are well received into the Front Door and triage is thorough and analytical in the application of thresholds for intervention. Effective decision-making at the Front Door has led to re-referrals reducing further, from 20% in 2020/21 to 16% in 2021/22, far lower than the national average of 23%.

Cases that require immediate actions are escalated appropriately and the relevant cases are proceeding to MASH where a multi-agency approach determines the next steps.

EDT actions are considered as proportionate and recording of these actions is thorough and appropriate. Where necessary, rapid safety plans are put in place and a handover process is in place to ensure day services are aware of any necessary tasks that might be required.

Section 47 enquiries are initiated at appropriate junctures across the service and measures are put in place to safeguard the child(ren). This is strengthened by oversight from the Service Manager, however the recording of information and analysis in Section 47s is variable and further work is required in this area. Through ongoing scrutiny of our thresholds, we are reassured that we are applying them appropriately and not intervening unnecessarily: our rate of S47s going to ICPC is between 50% and 60% (consistently higher than the national average of 37%).

Strong child-centred practice is evident across all areas of social care and the majority of assessments and plans are robust, ensuring children's needs are understood. Use of child protection/looked after and child in need procedures are well embedded within the teams and effective use of conferencing/reviews and relevant meetings strengthens the overall ethos to keep children safe and improve their lives.

Implementation of plans and regular case discussions/supervisions provide a forum for workers to discuss any worries about the case and where driving of the plan is executed.

In response to information in the public arena regarding the tragic events for Arthur (Solihull) and Star (Bradford), a review of Northumberland cases was asked for to give some targeted assurance. The conclusion summary was as follows:

‘Since the beginning of the pandemic, procedures have been put in place to ensure children continued to be seen on a regular basis by Local Authority staff. What is outlined above, is a positive picture of how Northumberland have operated during this period and the findings have evidenced a challenging but robust system that has benefited children, young people, and their families.’

### **Meaningful Measure 2- 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**

Children and young people are at the centre of social work practice, the engagement with and understanding of them being supported in a range of creative ways and underpinned by effective relationship building.

The views of young people in all aspects of work completed were strong, highlighted and give a real sense of working with and not doing to. Workers have a real understanding of their cases and are committed, motivated and driven to make a difference for the young people that they work with. This was corroborated in the audit regarding the voice of the child where it is recorded, ‘The majority of the practice observed through the audit was child-centred, engaging, creative, flexible, and reflected children’s experiences and this was demonstrated through consistent evidence on files of the work undertaken. Evidence of purposeful work with children was present however we could have further improved this by making sure what is recorded on the files is representative of the work undertaken.’

Parents and wider family members and networks are engaged well and there is regular and effective multi agency working.

Plans are variable, however are improved with the Signs of Safety form used now. Identification of family networks is improving, and they are being engaged and are creating safety for the child and are further reinforced through the use of “fire drills”.

### **Meaningful Measure 3- Making sure that children are living safely and securely as soon as possible**

At the Front Door, application of thresholds assists with the identification of next steps when a case is referred in and this may include use of rapid safety plans and where necessary seeking legal advice.

Good step-up arrangements are in place and quality of practice activity evidences that this is executed well and with the child at the focus, joint visits are arranged, and the situation explained to parents about the shift in level of involvement needed.

Between October 2021 and May 2022, we achieved a 13% increase in young people accepting their offer of a Return Home Interview, from 75% to 88%.

## Meaningful Measure 4 – Making sure families and staff from all services work with each other to make things better for children

Good multi agency working has been evidenced across the service and assessments, plans and attendance at relevant meetings is strong. Plans are variable in their recording however the Signs of Safety format supports clarity of which tasks will be completed by which professional. This gives workers, partners agencies and more importantly, families a clear understanding of what is expected. Partner agencies are more au fait now in the use of Signs of Safety (especially in the child protection arena) and this gives a more cohesive forum for making sure there are improved outcomes for children.

The pandemic has given more opportunity for professionals and family members to improve attendance at meetings as these have been held virtually.

Feedback obtained from some of the audit activity clearly highlight things are better for children because of our intervention and in a recent audit undertaken around involvement, this feedback was received from parents:

- *Mother would say that the current social worker has listened to her and her son's views and considered him being returned to her care as she has been able to make the changes needed for this to happen.*
- *Mother was clear that she felt listened to throughout involvement and was incredibly positive about the worker's approach and about how the plan had made a difference to her's and her daughter's lives.*

### 2.8 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?

We are agreeing a plan to sustain the progress in the application and embedding of the SoS practice model once the implementation Board is disbanded.

We are in the process of applying the best practice guidance issued by the Nuffield Family Justice Institute and supported by regional colleagues we are developing a pre-birth team which should be operational by October 2022.

We will implement the findings of the extra familial harm review to further strengthen and develop consistent approaches across social care.

We will proceed with further enhancing our relationship with Northumbria Police regarding our response to missing. Additionally, we will introduce increased quality of practice oversight of Return Home Interviews and missing to identify key areas for development and improvement to service delivery in the future.

For Disabled children, through the short break steering group work continue to develop the short break offer to make it more resilient and robust. This includes developing a resource panel to oversee allocation of short break resources.

We will implement a Children Not In School register to fulfil requirements of the Schools' Bill 2022 and implement new DfE guidance on 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

The areas of practice for further improvement which are identified through our quality of practice oversight continue to be addressed through a range of training and development work

### 3. CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS

#### 3.1 What have we done well in the last year?

We have strengthened our oversight of the corporate parenting strategy and related action plan through the creation of a corporate parenting management group that drives forward the actions and reports to MALAP.

We have participated with regional colleagues to deliver workshops around the PLWG recommendations and best practices, implementing these into our PLO processes. The well-established legal gateway panel has expanded to include the psychologist from the emotional well-being team and education representatives from the Virtual School to strengthen information sharing and decision making.

We have introduced permanence performance clinics to monitor and challenge the planning for children in our care who have not reached their permanent placement which supports improved accountability and timely care planning.



*Foster Carer Celebration 2022*

The impact on placement sufficiency has been managed in collaboration with a team of foster carers who have stretched their skill base to meet the needs of children that need looking after and the team in the service. The service has seen an increase in approved foster carers with an increase of children being placed with in house foster carers (16% during 2021/22). We have continued with creative recruitment practices and the use of flexibilities as required to maintain and increase our capacity.

A senior manager has been appointed to oversee residential care and the new build projects. External residential placements continue to be closely monitored by a multiagency High-Level resource Panel which meets weekly to agree and review external placements.

The quality of our in-house residential care has been maintained, including our secure unit which received a good rating with outstanding for education in the most recent inspection.

While placement sufficiency for young people with complex needs does remain a challenge, we have not placed any children under 16 in unregistered or unregulated provision in the year.

Within the LA, children who have an agreed adoption plan now become the responsibility of the permanence team so that they are offered specialist support from an adoption worker who will oversee their care planning until the adoption order is granted. This has improved the consistency and quality of the CPR documents, life story work, later life letters (an area for improvement noted in the ILACS inspection) and permanence planning for young children with adoption plans. We

have also introduced the UAE model for moving children from foster care to adoption which is seen as good practice and had positive feedback from carers and staff. The children with adoption plans who are not yet adopted are reviewed quarterly through the head of service-led adoption monitoring meetings that feedback to the ADM on progress.

We have continued to work constructively with Adopt North East (ANE) and the information for this year shows an increase in the volume of adoption activity with Northumberland having a higher percentage of children leaving care to be adopted than the national average (see below 3.3). It does remain the case however that no agreement has yet been reached between the member authorities for an agreed funding formula going forward.

We have stabilised school placements by working with schools to improve their understanding of adverse childhood experiences and promoting good practise for school transitions. and school attendance has improved as a consequence of prioritising it with the Attendance Initiative that rewards children for engaging with education.

Mid-year school moves have dropped as an impact of effective integrated working between the Virtual School, children's social care and the Family Placement Service. The Virtual School is involved in the early planning stages for children looked after and regular training and updates are provided for foster carers. We continue to have had no permanent exclusions for our looked after children in the year.

Looked after reviews have been conducted virtually and have facilitated wider participation, while IRO contact with the young people separate to the reviews has been increased (at March 2021, 71% of children had received a consultation in the previous 6 months, and this improved to 86% by March 2022). In the vast majority of cases, children's looked after reviews have been held within timescales (99% in each of the last 2 years). There is consistent IRO oversight of looked after plans in between reviews to further support timely progression of plans. We have also increased the percentage of CLA reviews which have been combined with EHCP reviews from 31%% to 56%.

Accessible consultation and pathways to mental health and wellbeing services for our children looked after have been maintained and further enhanced by the development of the NEWST team.

Family Time service has ensured that direct face to face contact has been put in place or resumed for priority work in line with regionally agreed approaches.

For our care leavers services, we have Implemented a number of Mark Riddell's recommendations including joining NLCBF and creating a PDF version of the Local Offer.

The transitions protocol and panel are now set up and working well; this has recently been reviewed with Adult Services. Contributions to a national DfE seminar have been requested to share this as good practice.

There is a clear process and criteria for care leavers to access bus passes where needed.

The accommodation processes and offer for young people leaving care is continuing to be much improved with Care Leaver and Accommodation Support Protocol meetings more embedded. There is an established Supported Accommodation forum in place with a performance dashboard to support this. Better relationships with housing mean that more young people have access to priority banding via Homefinder.

For further information on education outcomes for children looked after, please click [here](#).

### 3.2 What could we do better?

While we have improved our short-term placement stability, our long-term placement stability has reduced (See below for more detail) and placement stability remains a key priority.

We do provide a range of advocacy and participation supports and activities which are used by our children looked after and young people, but our use of independent visitors is low and we have developed workshops to heighten the profile of this.

The new-build residential project has been thwarted by unforeseen delays and is now behind the anticipated schedule so we need to progress this as speedily as possible.

We need to work with schools to introduce new strategies, or identify strategies that are known to work, to accelerate the academic progress of children looked after so that more are learning in their age-related curriculum. We need to reduce the number of persistent absentees.

Some of the developments planned for last year for our care leavers have not progressed as we had planned, in some cases because of the feedback and reality for young people (care leaver covenant app and discounted gym membership).

The health passport is still a work in progress due to the introduction of new CLA forms into the case recording system.

Some of the participation tools and forums for care leavers are not as widely used as we would want them to be.

### 3.3 What impact has this had and how do we know?

#### **Meaningful Measure 3- Making sure that children are living safely and securely as soon as possible**

There is a well embedded use of Legal Gateway who give oversight on cases that require planned public law outline (PLO) or legal action, and this is well documented within children's case files. PLO and cases within care proceedings are progressed without delay, the average for them to conclude from point of issue reducing from 40 weeks at March 2021 to 36 weeks at March 2022. The managers have a good grip of those cases and are aware of timescales and these are discussed in supervision.

The improved use of networks gives a more robust approach to consideration for rapid safety plans and initiation of viability assessments where necessary and these are seen to be completed in a timely way to prevent delay for the child. This is further evidenced by our use of Special Guardianship orders for children who exit care: 36 children looked after (19%) were made subject to special guardianship orders in the year, a higher proportion than the national figure of 14%.

Through permanence performance clinics, actions to improve the timeliness of permanence for our CLA have been identified, including timely discharge from care where appropriate. This is reflected in the reduction of children looked after in the last 12 months from 74 per 10K to 72 and



a sustained proportion of children being adopted or subject to an SGO. (See above and below for more detail).

We have undertaken focused work on children placed with parents and have reduced the number children on care orders at home in this year from 66 to 46 as at March 2022

The number of children in external residential placements has remained constant with the vast majority children in these homes being afforded stability.

73% of our children in care are placed within a 20-mile radius of the family home – similar to the national average, but a real strength given Northumberland’s size and rurality. This enables family and friend connections to be maintained that in turn supports placement stability.

We have increased our in-house fostering capacity as part of our drive to meet our sufficiency need: We had 336 total approved carers in 203 households (as of 31st March) increased from the previous year which was 307 in 182 households.

Of the 185 children who left care in the year ending March 2022, 34 were adopted – equating to 18%, which is better than regional and national averages. (see above)

There are 97% of care leavers in suitable accommodation which is significantly higher than the national and regional average.

We have an improving number of care leavers who are accessing EET-59%-again higher than regional and national averages.

**Meaningful Measure 2- 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**

Direct work with young people observed in practice days is of extremely high quality with staff clearly engaging with young people in meaningful and purposeful work and where appropriate using a range of creative methods and tools to support effective engagement.

We know from young people’s feedback that they feel supported and listened to:

***“Listened to me and was an extra voice to try and get me a place to live in Cramlington as that is where I wanted to be. I am now in accommodation in Cramlington and very happy.”***

***“The best way social services has helped me is by giving me a life my parents couldn't and making sure they can do whatever I have needed.”***

Feedback from young people about The Promise showed they value their relationship with their worker:

- 95% of respondents say they are always listened to.
- 99% say they are always treated with respect.
- 96% say their workers are always honest with them.

Whilst responses from young people are positive overall, it is worth noting that a small number of young people have identified as feeling that they were only “sometimes” supported, helped or involved in their care plans or interventions and we will continue to monitor that.

Feedback from young people about the best ways that the service has helped them again showed the importance to them of the relationship they have with their worker. The theme was that they trust, and respect them, and they feel workers also respect and value them, having time or making time for them. The following were most-frequently mentioned:

- Learning new skills or abilities
  - Understanding substance misuse risks and knowledge
  - Understanding consequences of actions
  - Being able to express themselves appropriately
  - Understanding how to deal with mental and emotional health issues
- Improved relationships at home
- Helping understand and move into adulthood
- Being listened to
  - Being available and supportive.

***“(worker’s name) has been really supportive and caring. She gives good advice and has earned my full respect and trust.***

***“I’d be homeless if it wasn’t for (worker’s name), no one else has ever helped me this much.”***

***“The service helped me change my life around and has inspired me to do a youth work degree.”***

From the increased focus on placement stability through the CLA Stability Task and Finish group, the deteriorating figures have been reversed (from 15% to 10%) and are now much closer to the national average of 9%.

Our long term placement stability however has reduced from 66% to 63% and this is primarily due to a number of young people reaching the age of 16 who had been and are in stable placements but no longer part of the cohort, as well as a reduction in the number of children in adoptive placements.

By using data to improve accurate recording, the proportion of 17 and 18-year-old care leavers with their ‘in touch’ activity information recorded has increased significantly from 63% in Sept 2021 to 90% in May 2022.

### **3.4 What are we going to do next to support continuous improvement?**

We will implement the pre-birth team which will offer parents the opportunity to care for their children where possible, but if they cannot then permanence planning will be clear and in place prior to the newborn's arrival reducing delay for their future placement.

Effective working relationships with the court and LFJB will be maintained to further improve practice in line with the PLWG recommendations.

Placement sufficiency and stability remain key challenges:

Continue to increase fostering placement availability and choice, ensuring the service remains inclusive and engaging to all, while maintaining a recruitment and development focus on several key targeted audiences, for example, sibling groups, older children, long term placements.

Northumberland is collaborating with the 11 other local authorities in the Northeast (NE) Region to implement the Mockingbird programme, a global award winning and pioneering programme led by The Fostering Network in the UK. NCC will be implementing the Model with a target launch date of October 2022. Mockingbird delivers sustainable foster care. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community.

We will progress the new builds of the children's homes, maximising the DfE grant funding agreed.

We will develop and implement a reviewed fee payment structure for our foster carers.

More children will be matched with long-term foster carers and this process will be overseen through permanence performance clinics.

Continue return to face to face reviews for our children looked after, supported where possible and appropriate by hybrid options to enhance participation.

Coming out of the pandemic, we need to further reinvigorate the mechanisms for participation for care leavers and to revitalise on the use of the independent visitor service.

Now that the new CLA forms are embedded, we will establish a more seamless approach to the health passport information being inserted into pathway plans.

We are using the school led tutoring grant to work with local tuition agencies to provide summer school opportunities for children looked after, identifying those that need the intervention most from targeted year groups.

## **Conclusion**

This self-assessment demonstrates the range of work that has been undertaken with the overall aim of continuously improving the range, quality and effectiveness of our services for children, young people and their families. We are pleased with the findings that our services continue to improve and that children and young people, their voices and lived experiences are at the centre of all of our work. We will strive to improve those areas of practice that we have identified, and we will also ensure that we are as prepared and inclusive as possible in responding to the major changes and challenges that are coming to social care in this and following years.

## Continuous Improvement Plan 2022/2023: Overview

As indicated above, our continuous improvement plan is drawn from the findings of this self-assessment, the ongoing quality of practice work and responses to national developments.

Improvement Priority	Areas to Cover
<p><b>1. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP:</b></p> <p>To ensure effective oversight of the progress and implementation of key strategies and that management actions are in place to support continuous improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Help and Prevention: Family hubs/SF/Healthy relationships</li> <li>• SEND: Develop the short break offer</li> <li>• Corporate Parenting</li> <li>• Quality of Practice Framework</li> <li>• Develop use of focused IT systems</li> <li>• National Developments: IRCSC and National Panel Review</li> <li>• Virtual school: CIN/School attendance</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. WORKFORCE:</b></p> <p>Further developing the workforce, embedding family-focused practice and supporting effective recruitment and retention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue embedding Signs of Safety</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention</li> <li>• Career pathways and grading</li> <li>• Pre-birth team</li> <li>• Implement the new admin structure</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY, STABILITY AND SUPPORT</b></p> <p>To further improve the stability, range of and support for placements and for children and young people living away from birth parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficiency: Foster care model and training               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>: Residential home builds</li> <li>: Supported accommodation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Using the school-led tutoring grant to provide summer school opportunities for children looked after</li> <li>• Working relationships with the court and Local Family Justice Board</li> <li>• Permanence</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. IMPROVING SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE:</b></p> <p>Further improve the effectiveness, timeliness and consistency of social care planning and practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation and embedding of the Quality of Practice Framework</li> <li>• Areas for identified practice improvement and consistency.</li> </ul>

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

<b>ANE</b>	Adopt North East
<b>ASD</b>	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
<b>ASYE</b>	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<b>CLA</b>	Children Looked After
<b>CME</b>	Children Missing Education
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>CSC</b>	Children's Social Care
<b>CSM</b>	Children's Services Manager
<b>DCS</b>	Director of Children's Services
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>EDT</b>	Emergency Duty Team
<b>EET</b>	Education, Employment and Training
<b>EHA</b>	Early Help Assessment
<b>EHCP</b>	Education Health Care Plan
<b>EHFW</b>	Early Help Family Worker
<b>EWB</b>	Emotional Wellbeing
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ICPC</b>	Initial Child Protection Conference
<b>ICS</b>	Integrated Children's System
<b>IRCSC</b>	Independent Review of Children's Social Care
<b>IRO</b>	Independent Reviewing Officer
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>L&amp;D</b>	Learning and Development
<b>LFJB</b>	Local Family Justice Board
<b>LIFT</b>	Children's Social Care Payments Module
<b>MALAP</b>	Multi Agency Looked After Partnership
<b>MASH</b>	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
<b>MCA</b>	Mental Capacity Act
<b>MSET</b>	Missing, Slavery, Exploited, Trafficked
<b>NAS</b>	Northumberland Adolescent Service
<b>NCASP</b>	Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership
<b>NCC</b>	Northumberland County Council
<b>NLCBF</b>	National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum
<b>NESWA</b>	North East Social Work Alliance
<b>NEWST</b>	Northumberland Emotional Well-being Support Team
<b>NFF</b>	Northumberland Families First
<b>PAM</b>	Parent Assessment
<b>PLO</b>	Public Law Outline
<b>PLWG</b>	Public Law Working Group
<b>QPAG</b>	Quality of Practice Assurance Group
<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability
<b>SF</b>	Supporting Families
<b>SGO</b>	Special Guardianship Order
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
<b>SoS</b>	Signs of Safety
<b>VCS</b>	Voluntary and Community Sector

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## Northumberland County Council

### **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

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#### **Proposal in Relation to Future Arrangements for the Youth Service**

Report of Graham Reiter and Audrey Kingham, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services.

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

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#### **Purpose of report**

To give members of the Committee an overview of the activity in relation to a recent review of the activity and impact of the Youth Service and provide a proposal for future arrangements of Northumberland County Council managed Youth Service activity across the county linked to the development of the Family Hub model.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. That members note the activity which has taken place during the review.
2. That members agree that moving forward the most effective way of delivering the Northumberland County Council Youth Service is through a locality based model managed through Family Hub arrangements.
3. That members agree that the delivery of most community based Youth Service groups is best done through VCS led organisations.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Enjoying, Connecting, Living and Learning priority in the NCC Corporate Plan 21-24.

#### **Key Issues**

1. There was a significant review of the Youth Service in 2016/17 leading to a change in focus and a new vision and culture statement being developed.
2. A further review of the progress of this has been undertaken following a change in the management of the Youth Service in May 2021.
3. The review has been comprehensive covering consultation with staff, needs analysis and overview of the current VCS youth provision in Northumberland.
4. The review found that the three key areas of the previous review have not been fully implemented or developed.
5. The review has undertaken an options analysis which sets out two possible options to move the Youth Service forward.
6. The first option to move the current posts of the Youth Service into the early help localities as part of the development of Family Hubs is recommended.
7. This will support the Youth Service to be more integrated with multi agency partners in the development of locality based early help and targeted services.



## **Background**

The Youth Service underwent a significant review in 2016/17 as part of it moving to sit under the Northumberland Adolescent Service. The findings from this review led to a change to the Youth Service structure and focus being implemented following a management of change process. This was followed by investment in support from an external consultant in developing a vision and culture statement for the service.

There have been further changes with the management arrangements of the Youth Service since then and, following new management arrangements being in place from May 2021, it was agreed that a further review of how the service was functioning was timely.

The review has featured a number of activities:

- Group discussions with the staff
- Staff survey
- Review of the delivery model agreed in 2018
- Needs analysis of young people across the county using determinants of anti-social behaviour, youth justice referrals and referrals to SORTED as well as wider deprivation figures.
- Identification of the number, location and size of VCS youth organisations across the county
- Meeting with county wide VCS youth providers

Following the review, it is clear that the three key elements of the previous changes to the Youth Service have not yet been fully implemented, namely:

- **Supporting individual young people using the Early Help Assessment framework** - the Youth Service, whilst supporting young people at an early help level, have not utilised the multi-agency assessment and planning process agreed through the Early Help Strategy and are not recording the interventions and outcomes for young people on the early help case recording system.
- **Developing and delivering targeted support** - the Youth Service have continued to provide youth group provision and detached youthwork in areas not identified as high in the needs analysis without any clear rationale for this.
- **Implementing a 'Grow your own' model** - whilst some progress has been made on this area this is not consistent enough and as a result the VCS have not been fully supported to enable them to access sustainable external funding meaning that in some areas of deprivation young people are not able to access the same level of support as in others. This seems to have been, in part, as a result of the focus remaining on the Youth Service continuing to deliver its own provision.

The review has identified that the current structure of the Youth Service is not able to move the Youth Service forward to further implement the above areas in full which are still seen to be valid and relevant to the aims and values of the Youth Service in Northumberland.

A thorough options analysis has been undertaken by the management overseeing the Youth Service and can be summarised as follows:

### **Option 1**

As part of the development of the Family Hub model in Northumberland and in line with the further development of early help and targeted services for 0-19 year old children and their families that the posts within the Youth Service focussed on delivering direct youth work are moved to sit within the early help locality teams. The current service lead post becomes wholly focussed on support the VCS youth providers to develop further under the 'Grow your own' agenda.

### **Option 2**

The Youth Service stays as is within the Northumberland Adolescent Service. Further training is provided in relation to the Early Help Assessment process and a refocus on the need to target work and support the VCS development.

### **Recommendation**

We would recommend that members agree with progressing with Option 1. This will enable the Youth Service to become more integrated at a local level with other multi-agency partners delivering services for children, young people and families. It will support the priority and emphasis on developing Family Hub services for families in Northumberland. The managers within the early help localities are well embedded in local communities and in supporting families through the early help assessment processes. The youth work lead posts will be supported to further understand their roles in relation to the integration agenda. Further capacity will be added to support the VCS Youth Service providers to grow and develop.

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	This proposal fits with the national and local policy drivers around delivering services for children and families in a more integrated way at a local level.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The current model does not operate in the most efficient way to provide targeted services to those young people most at need as set out above. By integrating the postholders into the Family Hub developments this will allow them to be part of the locality level targeted offer and share their expertise with other parts of the workforce in each area. It will also enable them to be supported to use the early help framework making more of the resource invested in the posts. Support delivered to the VCS to bid for funding will increase resource into Northumberland for young people from other sources.
<b>Legal</b>	N/A
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources</b>	This proposed change will need to be agreed via a consultation process with the current staff team.
<b>Property:</b>	Staff will need to be based in different buildings than they are currently which will need to be managed.
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	N/A
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	This proposal will support more targeted work diverting young people in high need areas away from criminal activity.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	The proposal will support more young people in targeted areas who need help the most.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	Having staff based locally will support a reduction in travel.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Having the Youth Service staff integrated with locality based Family Hub arrangements will support the health and wellbeing of young people and their families in each locality through a more integrated model of delivery.

<b>Wards:</b>	All wards
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**Report sign off**

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Acting Deputy Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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## Northumberland County Council

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

**8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

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#### **Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People in Northumberland**

Report of Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, Graham Reiter

Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide a current overview of support for children and young people with mental health needs and to outline future plans.

It offers a summary overview of the support available through the graduated response for mental health for children and young people from the following services:

- KOOOTH (Online resource commissioned by NE & NC ICB)
- Public Health School Nursing Service (NCC)
- Mental Health Support Teams within the Trailblazer schools
- Primary Mental Health Team (PMHW, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust)
- High Incidence Needs Teams (Northumberland Inclusive Education Services, NCC)
- Northumberland Emotional Wellbeing Support Team (NEWST, NCC)
- Children and Young People's Service (CYPS, Cumbria, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Trust)

#### **Recommendations**

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

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Recognise the support now on offer for children and young people in Northumberland.
3. Note future plans and identify any potential issues for further consideration if appropriate.

## Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to:

- The Northumberland SEND Strategy 2021-24
- The Northumberland Children and Young Peoples Plan 2019-2022
- Northumberland Children's Mental Health Strategic Plan (currently under review)
- Northumberland's Learning Disability and Autism 3-year plan
- The NHS Long Term Plan

## National Context

It is recognised nationally that the complexity of children's mental health has been increasing and this is more evident following the impact of COVID. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities updated the [COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report](#) in April 2022 and found that the pandemic has substantially affected **some** children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

- This impact was in different ways and at different stages of the pandemic
- Those particularly affected were
  - Girls and young women
  - The disadvantaged
  - Those with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) and / or those with pre-existing mental health needs
- Impact was different according to gender
  - Boys reported more symptoms of behavioural and attention difficulties
  - Girls had higher levels of emotional difficulties, poorer wellbeing and anxiety

These national findings are reflected in Northumberland, with an increase in need being seen across all services who offer support for mental health.

## Key Issues

1. **Accessing the right support at the right time.** There is an ongoing challenge in ensuring support is available when required from specialist mental health services, while also maintaining a focus on earlier identification of needs, supporting young people at the earliest opportunity to access the support required by the right professionals, at the right time.
2. **Increased demand for support.** Referrals for emotional health and wellbeing support were rising prior to 2020, however COVID 19 has added increased pressure. The number of children and young people requiring low level support provided by a number of services following early identification has increased significantly.
3. **Staff recruitment and retention** has impacted on service delivery. There is a need to understand the impact this has on the workforce and the delivery of

interventions working collaboratively across education, health, social care and the private and voluntary.

## Background

Support for children and young people’s mental health is often described using the Thrive Model. This report describes the position of different services who provide mental health support to the majority of children and young people described against the level of interventions below. It does not describe all forms of mental health support available. Moving between the tiers of intervention is described as the ‘graduated response’

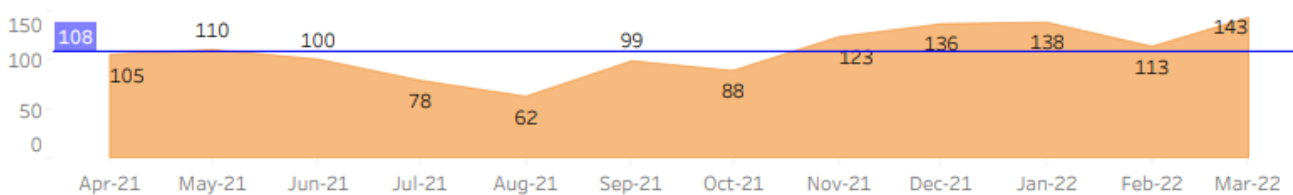
- **Coping** – those who need advice and signposting
- **Getting help** – those who need focussed goal-based input
- **Getting more help** – those who need more extensive and specialist goal-based help
- **Accessing specialist help** – those whose mental health places their wellbeing at risk

## KOOTH (Coping)

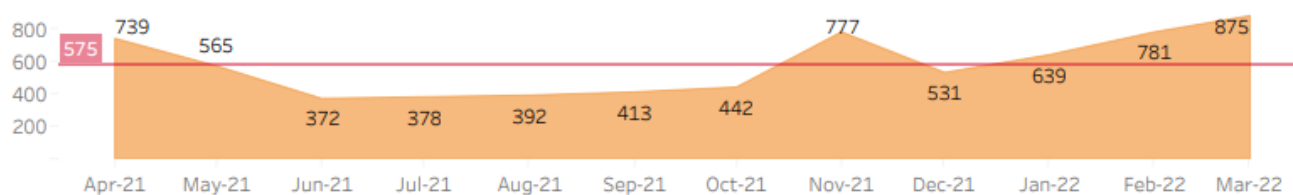
Kooth is a confidential and anonymous service available on any web enabled, internet connected device including laptop, smart phone or table and is available 24/7, 365 days a year to provide self- help resources, static forums and magazine articles and links where necessary to crisis support. It is available to young people aged 11-25 years who can access the support directly.

Kooth includes 1-1 scheduled and drop in live counselling options with qualified professionals, which take place between 12 noon until 10 pm Mon – Fri and 6pm – 10pm Sat/Sunday 365 days a year. Children and young people can receive up to six sessions of counselling support from Kooth, before either moving on or being signposted / referred to other mental health support. In addition on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday there is a live moderated forum which takes place in the early evening, safeguarded and monitored by trained staff.

## Number of unique service users accessing Kooth Apr 21 – Mar 22



## Number of logins per month Apr 21 – Mar 22





Kooth is accessed on average 68% of the time by young people outside 9-5 hours. In the counselling sessions, anxiety and stress was the most common issue young people sought support for, followed by self harm for girls and friendships for boys.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOOL NURSING (PHSN) (Coping)**

The Northumberland 0-19 service (Public Health School Nursing element) contributes to the graduated response by providing a county wide offer of support to children and young people aged between 5 and 19 years (and up to 25 years for those with a special educational need or disability) who have low to moderate emotional wellbeing and mental health needs.

There are currently 22 whole time equivalent members of the school nursing skill mix team including two locality managers, public health school nurses, staff nurses and support workers. As of September 2021, there were 163 schools, academies and free schools in Northumberland and the 5-19 population is estimated to be 49,800.

The service has very recently undergone a restructure and the whole-time equivalent staff assigned to the 5-19 service has increased. The service will also be a 0-19 service in the future facilitating flexibility across the service.

When the graduated response was developed, it was intended that school nursing would provide support for children and young people whose needs were in the “coping” sector of the THRIVE model. That is, they needed advice and signposting with initial concerns based on early onset problems which were impacting on one area of the child’s functioning.

Public Health School Nursing, provide:

- Chat Health. A confidential text messaging service that enables children and young people (aged 11-19) to contact their school nursing team.
- Signposting to online and other resources, if appropriate
- Face to face support for children and young people with low mood, anxiety, early onset of self-harming behaviours, regulation of emotions, self-esteem and confidence difficulties.
- This includes a health assessment, signposting and a plan of care as appropriate with goal setting. Interventions are short term with review after 3-6 sessions and onward referral if necessary.

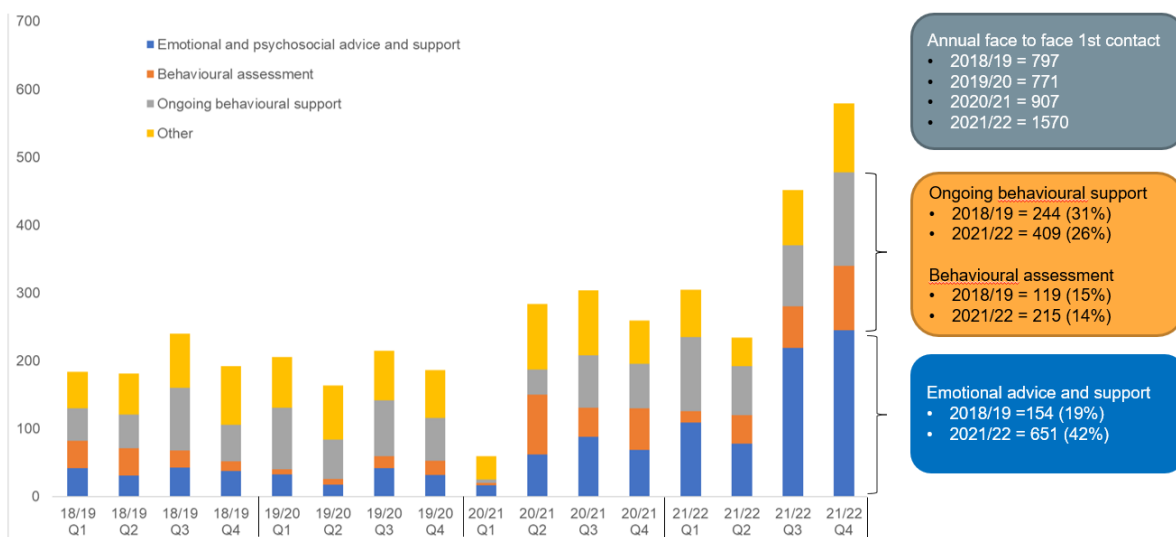
## Increased Demand for Support Since 2020

Since 2020 there has been a marked and sustained increase in the number of referrals to school nursing for emotional and mental health advice and support as shown in the figure below. This situation is not peculiar to Northumberland and is mirrored in other 0-19 services elsewhere. Alongside the increase in demand, there have been challenges with timely recruitment to posts with vacancies within the team at different points over the past two years.

Emotional advice and support accounts for an increasing proportion of face-to-face contacts and in 2021/22 the number of first contacts with a school nurse for emotional advice and support was four times higher than in 2018/19.

In addition, approximately 40% of face-to-face school nursing contacts are for behavioural assessment or ongoing behavioural support and the number of referrals has also increased. These are frequently referrals for observation of behaviour in school and subsequent assessment which have been requested to support a referral to CYPS.

### Number of face to face first contacts with a school nurse, 2018/19 to 2021/22



### Impact on School Nursing Waiting Times

The surge in demand for emotional wellbeing and mental health support has impacted on waiting times for children and young people, who have been triaged and are waiting for an intervention. All referrals are triaged by a school nurse within 2 working days of receipt. Safeguarding, Child in Need and those identified with priority mental health needs receive an urgent response. As of 31 March 2022, the maximum waiting time for those needing an intervention ranged from 12 weeks in the North and West localities to up to 26 weeks in the South East. Referrals for safeguarding are not placed on a waiting list and only a proportion of children are waiting for emotional or mental health support.

There has been a marked surge in referrals of children experiencing low-level anxiety and low mood. This is particularly apparent in primary school age children, with some as young as 5 years old reported to be suffering with symptoms of anxiety. The service has also experienced a high volume of referrals for emotional health and wellbeing support for children undergoing assessment with CYPS for Autism and ADHD.

### Response to Increased Demand

A range of measures have been implemented since July 2021 to manage waiting times and all those waiting to be seen have recently been re-triaged.

Upon acceptance of a referral for anxiety/low mood/self-harming behaviour telephone contact is always made with the child's parent or carer. This ensures that a robust safety plan is developed, and parents/carers are fully informed around any actions to be taken should the child's presentation deteriorate. A letter is also sent to parents/carers advising

that the service is operating a waiting list and how to contact the service if needed. This letter includes information about online and other resources including Kooth and Young Minds which parents/carers/young people can access.

School nurses frequently receive referrals for young people with more complex needs which fall within the “getting help” category of the THRIVE model and graduated approach.

Referrals are received for children with needs affecting different aspects of their lives, including multiple factors related to lifestyle and often, parental behaviours. In response, the intensity of support required by some children and young people has increased. This sustained increase in referrals to school nursing and higher level of need is currently the focus of a system wide response across all partners.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAMS (MHST) (Coping, getting help)**

Mental Health Support Teams have been established following the successful bid for monies through the NHS national Trailblazer programme.

#### Aims of Provision

- Deliver evidence-based interventions for mild to moderate mental health issues.
- Support the designated SMHL (Senior Mental Health Lead) in each education setting to introduce or further develop their whole school/college approach.
- Provide timely advice to school and college staff, and liaise with external specialist services, to help children and young people to get the right support and stay in education.

The Mental Health Support Teams are operational in 54 schools and settings across

- Hexham and Blyth school partnership (wave 1 funding)
- Ashington and Bedlington schools (wave 3 funding)

The teams delivered low level intensity interventions to 327 young people in the period of September 2021 to February 2022.

Mental Health Support Teams consist of:

EMHPs (Educational Mental Health Practitioners) who provide low intensity interventions for children and young people with mild to moderate mental health needs. Their work is supported a Peer Mentor who provides support to EMHPs in delivering interventions.

EMHPs deliver:

- Co facilitation of the ‘Friends’ group-based programmes with the Primary Mental Health Workers and school-based staff.
- Co design and co facilitation of the school-based lesson plans with the Primary Mental Health Workers and school-based staff.
- Co design and co facilitation of psycho-education workshops for children, young people, parents, carers with the Primary Mental Health Workers, Early Help Family Workers and Health Staff.

- Whole school development work

Mental Health Support Teams can also access the following input from existing services that is funded additional to their core offer:

Primary Mental Health Workers, who provide:

- 1:1 individual evidenced based intervention with children and young people within the trailblazer schools.
- Clinical and case management supervision for the Educational Mental Health practitioners within the service.
- Supervision and support to the Be You Peer Education Worker.
- Co facilitation of the FRIENDS and ROAR training programmes. (FRIENDS programme supports children to remember and use strategies to manage anxiety, ROAR programme supports schools staff to identify signs and symptoms of mental health distress in children, young people and staff and understand what they can do in school to support them).
- Co design and co facilitation of the school-based lesson plans with the Educational Mental Health Practitioners and schools-based staff.

Mental Health Support Teams delivered low level intensity interventions to 327 young people in the period of September 2021 to February 2022.

Information about support for emotional health and wellbeing and the work of the Mental Health Support Teams in Northumberland is available at the 'Be You' website. This was co-produced and launched as part of the MHST work to provide advice and guidance to children, young people, families, and practitioners around supporting mental health and wellbeing. In 2021 the website had been accessed 1300 number of times.



Weblink : [About Us | NHS Trailblazers \(beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk\)](https://www.beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk)

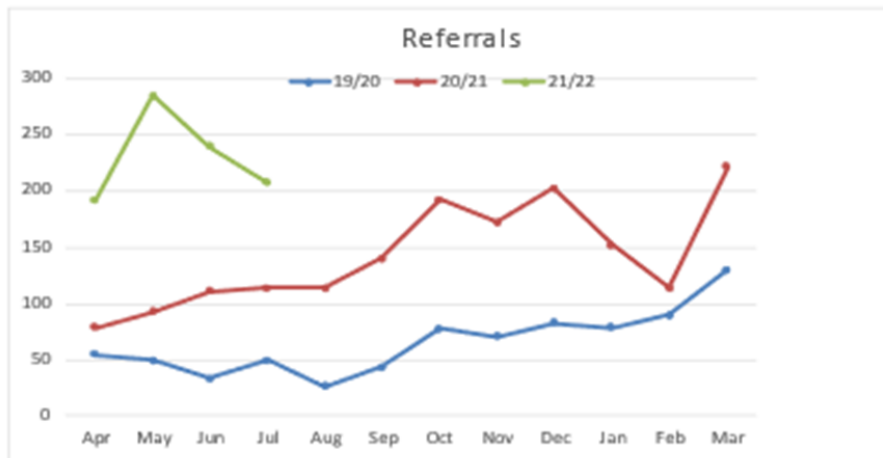
### **PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH WORKER (PMHW) (Getting help)**

The PMHW team provide a targeted early intervention and prevention mental health service to support children and young people and the adults who support them across Northumberland.

PMHW provide:

- assessment, formulation, and higher level evidenced based interventions on a one-to-one basis
- telephone consultation line to provide advice, guidance and signposting to professionals and parents/ carers
- liaison support through the multi-agency early help hub processes, providing a mental health perspective on advice and signposting to ensure that the right service is accessed at the right time

- teaching and training to raise awareness of children’s mental health with colleagues in a range of universal services across education, health, social care, youth and community and voluntary services



The PMHW Team have seen a significant increase in the number of referrals received over the previous years. The service has experienced difficulties in recruitment and retention of the current workforce which is currently being addressed with a review of the staffing structure. Both these components have impacted on the waiting times which have increased, with the current average wait being July 2022, 8.6 weeks to assessment and 9.7 to treatment.

**HIGH INCIDENCE NEEDS TEAMS (HINT) (Coping, Getting help)**

These teams sit within the Northumberland Inclusive Education Services (NIES) in NCC and consist of specialist advisory teachers and support workers with specialist knowledge of supporting children with additional needs in schools. The services that support children and young people’s mental health are:

- Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support Service
  - provides support and advice to schools and young people. The service supports children and young people who are displaying challenging behaviour due to underlying social and emotional needs.
- Autism Support Team
  - offers school-based support to children and young people with social communication difficulties or a diagnosis of Autism.

Both teams have seen an increase in demand over the previous two years.

Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Support Team (EWB)

	2019-2020 (SLA in place)	2020-2021	2021-2022 (up to 30/06/22)
Number of referrals	191	254	376
Number of schools that referred into Service	69	99	118
Number of training courses delivered	4	26	34
Number of schools receiving training	10	97	36
Number of delegates (reach number)	165	378	373
Number of MAPA/SIT training courses delivered	17	16	11
Number of schools receiving MAPA/SIT training	24	21	14
Number of delegates (reach number) SIT/MAPA	159	152	116

### Autism Support Service

	2019-2020 (SLA in place)	2020-2021	2021-2022 (up to 29/06/22)
Number of referrals	261	364	461
Number of schools that referred into Service	85	103	120
Number of training courses delivered	18	32	45
Number of schools receiving training	12	104	37
Number of delegates (reach number)	172	304	643
Number of Cygnet training courses delivered	8	12	14
Number of delegates (reach number) Cygnet	45	111	120

- To note: access to support services became free at point of delivery in September 2020, prior to this, support was purchased through Service Level Agreements with individual schools.
- Not all Local Authorities have teams of specialist advisory teachers to support schools.

Both teams are currently at capacity. For a period of time over the past month, the Autism Support team has been offering a telephone consultation line only, which has proven to be successful for managing first contact with schools and in some cases has resolved queries around best ways to support particular young people. The specialist teachers and support workers have been unable to carry out individual assessments. Autism Family Support Workers appointed in January have been fully occupied with casework related to children and young people struggling to attend school due to anxiety. The referral pathway for this starts with the Children Missing Education panel (CME). As the Summer term progressed, EWB Team have had very limited capacity to undertake school visits for newly referred children and young people and have prioritised those at imminent risk of exclusion.

### **NORTHUMBERLAND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SUPPORT TEAM (NEWST)** (Getting help)

Four Specialist Practitioners, one Clinical Psychologist and one Assistant Psychologist have been recruited to Northumberland Emotional Wellbeing Support Team (NEWST).

This service is embedded within children's social care.

The aims of the service are to:

- help systems understand and meet the emotional and mental health needs of the young person.
- provide an integrated approach to supporting vulnerable young people and their families.
- promote stability, resilience, and confidence in the system around a young person.
- enable young people with complex needs to thrive.

The team began accepting referrals in January 2022 and as of the end of April 2022 had provided system support to 94 children in 71 families. The team will develop a programme of training for all professionals in topics relating to mental health over the coming year.

There is ongoing evaluation of the impact of NEWST which will be reported on in the future

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS SERVICE (CYPS)** (Getting more help, Accessing specialist help) (This service is sometimes known as CAMHS in other areas)

The Children and Young People's Service provides a single service to all children and young people aged 0-18 years living in Northumberland who present with mental health difficulties. This includes children and young people who may have learning difficulties and those living in a range of difficult and challenging circumstances.

CYPS provides:

- Assessment, diagnosis and intervention on a range of mental health issues.
- Intensive response and home-based treatment for those children and young people whose mental health is causing significant concern.
- An intensive Eating Disorder Service to support children and young people on the eating disorder pathway who are at risk of an inpatient admission.
- A comprehensive transition support package to those young people who are approaching their 18th birthday and may need continuing support as adults.
- Training, consultation, support and advice to front line staff working in targeted services for children.

The service delivers support for the majority of children and young people through three main pathways:

- Specialist mental health support for children and young people experiencing complex, severe, or persistent mental health problems provided by a multidisciplinary team.
- Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic pathway provide specialist assessment, treatment, support and advice via a Multi-Disciplinary Team for Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism
- Learning Disability Pathway who provide specialist assessment, treatment, support and advice via a Multi-Disciplinary Team to young people who present with high levels of challenging behaviour that are having a significant impact upon their functioning for young people with moderate to complex needs

Referrals into all three pathways have increased up to 80% over the past year, which has impacted on waiting times. Alongside the increase in referrals, there have been challenges with timely recruitment to posts with vacancies within CYPS at different points over the past two years.

However, although waiting times have increased, they remain strong, with CYPS in Northumberland being one of the most responsive services in the North East.

As of June 2022	Average waiting time to assessment	Average waiting time to treatment
Mental Health pathway	1 week	2 weeks
Neurodevelopmental pathway	5 weeks	6 weeks
Learning Disability	2 weeks	2 weeks

Northumberland CYPS has a single point of access providing telephone consultation for advice/guidance and support to other services as required and referral access to CYPS. This has proven to be a positive implementation for professionals, and families who have reported consistency, helpful and prompt responses. In addition, Northumberland CYPS also offer 'Consultant connect' which is direct advice and consultation to GP's who have signed up to this service.

## Summary

There are currently pressures on services that support children and young people's mental health that are system wide and are impacting at all levels of the mental health graduated response. These pressures are not unique to Northumberland and are being experienced by services across the country.

In addition to the pressures identified at the beginning of the report, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 has impacted on staff absence.

While this report has highlighted the challenges currently within the system, it is important to note that Northumberland is in a strong position to address these:

- Strong culture of collaboration around the commissioning, planning and delivery of services to support children and young people's mental health across organisations (cited by Ofsted & CQC in SEND Revisit letter).
- Average waiting times for access to CYPS is on average 4 weeks to assessment and 5 weeks to treatment. While this has increased over the past year, it remains the lowest waiting time in the North East.
- NCC have identified the need for specialist advisory teachers to provide support to schools in meeting needs and made the services free at point of delivery as from September 20. This has removed inequalities of access and resulted in more support for individual learners and more schools receiving training, support and advice to meet the needs of children and young people. It should be noted that not all Local Authorities have central teams that provide support to schools and settings in this way.

There is robust monitoring of performance across the graduated response which is regularly reviewed with system leads. Discussions are ongoing across all services who



provide support across the graduated approach to ensure that those with the highest levels of need are seen promptly and waiting list times are addressed. Examples of initiatives being employed to support access to services at this time of increased referrals include:

- Use of telephone helplines to enable children, young people, their families and the practitioners who support them to gain access to timely advice
- Services working together to manage need across the graduated response and ensure referrals go to the right service at the right time
- Close monitoring of waiting lists and workforce pressures to identify when actions need to happen

## **Future Plans**

The Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group is a multi-agency group of system leads from across NCC, North East and North Cumbria ICB in Northumberland, CNTW, Northumbria Healthcare Trust, Voluntary agencies and Northumberland Parent Carer Forum. This group leads the Northumberland response to meeting the needs of children and young people with mental health needs.

An Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy is currently in development which describes the vision for meeting the needs of children and young people with mental health needs in Northumberland over the next three years, and how challenges will be addressed. This is due for consultation at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2022 and clearly sets out the actions that will be needed across the system to meet the challenges identified within this report.

## Implications

Covid, whilst bringing opportunities to explore new ways of working has brought challenges with increase in referrals, staff absence and the effects on staff wellbeing which will continue for the foreseeable future.

Evidencing outcomes and impact across the system, different recording systems / monitoring times and baselines, early help impact can take time to evidence and may take several years to start to make a positive impact.

Difficulty in recruitment within the county to support workforce growth and skills mix. Rurality and geography have impacted on service development and equitable, effective and efficient use of resources.

<b>Policy</b>	A Draft Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be circulated in September 2022.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Performance of mental health services is reviewed regularly by the organisations who commission services through governance routes.
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Procurement</b>	n/a
<b>Human Resources</b>	n/a
<b>Property</b>	Services that support children and young people's mental health are delivered in a range of locations across different providers and different organisations. This can range from children and young people's homes, schools, hospitals, clinics etc.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	All organisations supporting children and young people's mental health support equal access to services.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Individual organisations have robust risk assessment systems in place to ensure that risk is identified and supported.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	Mental health and Youth Offending populations overlap.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The views of children and young people and their parents / carers are central to developments and improvements through ensuring all developments are co-produced.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	n/a
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	This details support for children and young people with mental health needs.
<b>Wards</b>	n/a

## Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter & Audrey Kingham
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder	Guy Renner-Thompson

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and

Shirley May, CYP Operational Commissioning Manager (NE & NC ICB at Northumberland)

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## Northumberland County Council

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

**8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022**

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#### **Family Hubs Development**

Report of Graham Reiter and Audrey Kingham, Joint Interim Directors of Children's Services.

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

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#### **Purpose of report**

To provide an update in relation to DfE funding for Family Hub developments in Northumberland.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Agree to proceed with the funding for the Family Hub offer.
2. Support the development of the governance and wider processes to underpin this.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Enjoying, Connecting, Living and Learning priority in the NCC Corporate Plan 21-24.

#### **Key Issues**

1. Northumberland has been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who can receive additional funding to develop the Family Hub offer. The overall amount potentially available for Northumberland between Autumn 2022 and March 2025 is indicated to be between £3.321m and £3.446m.
2. We have been working on developing the Family Hub model in Northumberland for some time building on the already established Early Help

Locality Model across the county. This has been supported by the change in partnership arrangements for the Public Health 0-19 service.

3. There are clear expectations of what services need to be put in place which are detailed in the report.
4. Strategic oversight, governance arrangements and partnership and place engagement need to be put in position promptly to access the monies and to be in a position to bid for further Trailblazer funds which are coming on stream imminently. As noted above we will build on the current Family Hub developments and structures to achieve this and link into wider partnership governance developments that are taking place.
5. There is a need to further develop capacity to support this work, which will utilise existing project and support capacity and be enhanced through the incoming grant funding. There is also a need to further develop the cross departmental and multi-agency data sharing to meet the funding requirements.

## **1. Background**

The development of Family Hubs is a national DfE / DHSC agenda which is based upon the Best Start for Life report.

“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.”

Funding of £301m has been committed by Central Government up to March 2025 to support 75 upper tier local authorities to develop the family hub model in their areas.

### **Northumberland Position**

Northumberland has been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who can receive additional funding to develop the Family Hub offer. We have received notification of our indicative funding levels in the last week subject to final confirmation and our commitment to sign up to the requirements of the programme, its delivery and development. The overall amount potentially available for Northumberland between Autumn 2022 and March 2025 is indicated to be between £3.321m and £3.446m.

### **Expectations**

We are expected to work with local partners to:

- Open Family Hubs and deliver visible change for families in the first half of 2023.
- Deliver services through our Family Hub Model.
- Agree to the set of minimum expectations across all areas of the programme set out within the DfE programme guide.
- Commit to meeting the minimum expectations by March 2025 at the latest.

There are a significant number of minimum expectations in the key service areas which we will be expected to develop; these are:

- Parenting support.
- Parent–infant relationships and perinatal mental health support.
- Early language and the Home Learning Environment.
- Infant feeding.

Within Northumberland we are on a positive journey in some of these areas but there is significant work to do in others. All areas will require multi-agency input and in some areas to be led by health or education colleagues.

We will also be required to:

- Appoint a single named accountable lead for Start for Life (the programme guide suggests this is the DCS or DPH).
- Appoint named leads for our Family Hubs and Start for Life programme / transformation team to develop and appoint to the team.
- Work with the National Centre for Family Hubs and Start for Life Unit to share learning and best practice.
- Implement Central Government branding requirements.
- Engage with the digital solutions being developed through the Family Hubs Growing Up Well Project.
- Commit to all data collection and monitoring expectations associated with the programme, including if services are commissioned out to other providers.
- Agree to take part in the national evaluation of the programme if approached to do so.
- Commit to use the funding in line with the programme guide, and to either incrementally add to existing services, complement existing services or offer new services.

We will be asked to sign up to these commitments in the late summer / early autumn. In preparation for doing this we are required to have engaged and consulted with a range of people. This will include formal sign up from:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Children's Services
- Director of Public Health
- Chief Financial Officer
- Leader of the Council
- Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board

In addition we will be expected to have engaged with the following:

- Local MP(s)
- Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
- Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
- Integrated Care Board Executive leads
- Local providers of services that are relevant to programme delivery i.e. local health systems, e.g. NHS trust, local midwifery team, health visitor leads.
- Local third sector / voluntary, community / faith organisations / education settings and local agencies, where relevant to delivery of the programme through Family Hubs locally.



## **Developments So Far**

We have been working on developing the Family Hub model in Northumberland for some time building on the already established Early Help Locality Model across the county. This has been supported by the change in partnership arrangements for the Public Health 0-19 service. Currently activity has:

- Established a Family Hub implementation group and five stakeholder working groups involving a range of partners.
- Progressed the colocation of partner health services into the current Children's Centre buildings including midwifery, health visiting and primary mental health services.
- Been part of regional improvement work to share expertise.
- Gathered information and views from parents, carers and young people using our services.
- Identified a soft launch date of 28<sup>th</sup> September to rebrand current Children's Centre buildings as Family Hubs.

## **2. Wider Issues**

### **Capacity**

Developments so far within Northumberland have been led by staff sitting within the Early Help and Prevention service. In making a commitment to deliver the Family Hub programme and drawing down the funding attached we are making a significant commitment to develop and deliver services.

To do this we are required to demonstrate we have done a thorough needs analysis, developed a clear project delivery plan with milestones and outcomes, developed our Start for Life website with our offer for all new parents and committed to opening Family Hubs by the first part of 2023.

This is in addition to all the development required to ensure that the services we want to deliver are in place, that we are measuring and monitoring engagement and impact and working with families, young people and partner agencies to work towards sustainable services for the future.

Whilst we will receive funding within 22/23, we have been advised that this will be in two sums, the first not being provided until after the October cut off date for sign up.

### **Data Sharing**

One of the key aspects which the programme stresses must be delivered on is the ability to use data to identify and support those families in need of help who may not be engaging with services. This aligns with the data sharing requirements of the Supporting Families programme which also brings with it considerable potential funding.

We are not currently in a position in Northumberland where we have a clear commitment across different local authority departments or with partner agencies to share individual level data.

This will hamper our ability to deliver on this programme and creates a risk that we could lose funding in Years 2 and 3.

### **Governance**

There are currently a significant number of multi-agency strategic groups which meet in Northumberland who consider issues in relation to children and families. There has been some mapping of these groups and a commitment made to try and streamline these.

However, it is clear that sign up for this programme requires a clear governance route which needs to be established quickly. As stated in the 'developments so far' there is a Family Hub Implementation Group which does feed into the Children and Young People's Partnership but going forward this group needs to have more prominence and the governance arrangements for it ensure that all senior leaders in key agencies are well sighted on the Family Hub requirements and developments.

### **3. Recommendations**

1. For the Council to agree that Northumberland want to sign up to this programme.
2. Agreement to be reached about who and how the strategic leads of the key partners will be approached as well as the other named interested parties. Once this is completed and sign up agreed at that level further meetings can be arranged with more operational managers to discuss practical solutions to the development of the programme and service areas.
3. Agreement to be reached about the single accountable lead and the governance arrangements initially for this programme to ensure it has strategic level oversight.
4. Agreement to be given to start to develop and recruit to a project team to deliver this programme prior to the initial grant being received. This may include either seconding or commissioning staff from partner agencies.
5. Commitment to be given to overcome the current barriers in relation to data sharing which exist within the Council and between the Council and partner agencies.

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	This is part of the national Best Start in Life policy and locally is key to children and families getting the right support at the right time.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	This is bringing significant national funding to Northumberland and will build on the effective work that is already in place in relation to early help and Family Hub developments.
<b>Legal</b>	'The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council''
<b>Procurement</b>	
<b>Human Resources</b>	
<b>Property:</b>	As part of the developments we are looking to maximise the use of and co-location of services in Children's Centre buildings wherever possible and appropriate.
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	N/A
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	This will support children and families being able to access the right support in one place.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	
<b>Wards:</b>	All wards

## Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
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Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Interim Deputy Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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# **Northumberland County Council**

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

### **Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2022 - 2023**

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

30 August 2022 - CA

Agenda Item 12

## 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 2022 - 2023**

8 September 2022

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PRE-SCRTINY:- Outcome of Informal Consultation on School Organisation for the Coquet Partnership

Finance & Performance

Children Social Care Self Assessment

Complaints Annual Report 2021/2022 - children's social care, and continuing health care services

Support for Children and Young people with mental health needs in Northumberland

Review of Youth Services

This report sets out the findings of the informal consultation meetings that have taken place with schools in the Coquet Partnership to discuss the organisation of schools in the partnership, as requested by the first schools and in light of obtaining best value for capital funding for investment in schools in the partnership as allocated in the Council's Medium Term Plan. Cabinet is also asked to permit the initiation of informal consultation on proposals for individual schools with stakeholders in the area served by Coquet Partnership.

To consider current performance and the budgetary position for services within the Committee's terms of reference.

The report is to share the content and findings of the children's social care self-assessment.

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

Overview of the journey travelled for Children and Young People's Emotional Mental health learning disability and Autism services since 2018 and to provide an update on the future plans for the next 12 months.



	Family Hubs Development	To provide an update in relation to DfE funding.
6 October 2022		
Page 185	Regional Schools Director's Overview	An overview of the Regional Schools Director's (RSD) role and responsibilities.
	Care Proceedings and Public Law Outline: Annual Report on progress	To present Children's Services' performance within legal proceedings in 2020/21.
	School Transport Governance Arrangements	Review of the current governance arrangements for school transport providers and staff.
	SEND Place Planning and Capacity Strategy	
	Pegasus Centre Update	An update on the report considered by Cabinet in March.
	Education Funding from Residential and Commercial builds (S106)	Report on funding for education allocated under S106 funding from new residential and commercial builds.
3 November 2022		
	Safeguard Activity Trends & CIS Benchmarking Report	
	The Northumberland Inclusion Strategy	
	SEND Place Planning and Capacity Strategy	

1 December 2022		
	<p>Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report</p> <p>Adoption Annual Report</p> <p>Care proceedings and Public Law Outline: Annual Report on progress</p>	<p>To provide an overview of the work completed by the NSSP undertaken from 2020-2021.</p> <p>To present Children's Services' performance within legal proceedings in 2020/21</p>
5 January 2023		
	<b>National Funding Formula and School Funding 2023/24</b>	<b>To update Cabinet regarding the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the implications for 2023/24 School Funding in Northumberland.</b>
2 February 2023		
	<p><b>School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2024/2025 Academic Year</b></p> <p>Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021</p>	<p><b>This report informs Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation on School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for the 2024/25 Academic Year as required by the School Admissions Code 2014. Approval (determination) of these admission arrangements is also sought.</b></p> <p>To present the education outcomes of Northumberland's looked after children for the academic year 2021 – 2022.</p>

	<p>Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report</p> <p>Adult Learning Service Annual Report: Learning and Skills Service</p>	<p>To provide an overview of the work completed by the NSSP undertaken from 2021-2022.</p> <p>The annual report for Learning and Skills Service is provided to report the performance against the Education Inspection Framework; present the work of the Careers Guidance Team and understand the role and impact of the Employability and Skills team within the wider service. The Learning and Skills Service leads a number of specialist areas and provides training for young people age 16-19, adults and apprentices across eight campuses in Northumberland as well as training in the workplace.</p>
2 March 2023		
Page 187	<p>Director of Education Annual Report: Key Educational Outcomes (2021-2022 Academic Year)</p> <p>Finance &amp; Performance</p> <p>Safeguarding Activity Trend</p>	<p>Annual report on the key educational outcomes of the previous academic year. The Committee will be asked to identify any further areas for scrutiny.</p> <p>To consider current performance and the budgetary position for services within the Committee's terms of reference</p> <p>To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.</p>
6 April 2023		
	Annual Report of Principle Social Worker	To advise and update the Scrutiny Committee about the input and work of the Principal Social Worker in 2021/22 and an overview of the quality of practice and development needs of frontline social workers.

**Northumberland County Council**  
**Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2022-2023**

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Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
188	5 May 2022	<b>Informal Consultation on School Organisation for The Coquet Partnership</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 10 May, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
2	5 May 2022	<b>Update On Future Arrangements for The Delivery of Early Help Locality Services in Northumberland</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposed changes to the current commissioning arrangements be agreed; and</li> <li>2. The temporary increase in expenditure during 2022/23, 2223/24 and 2024/25, which would be covered by the additional grant funding to be received over the same period from the</li> </ul>	No further action

			Supporting Families programme and the Family Hub and Start for life Programmes be noted.	
3	26 May 2022	<b>Education Strategy Board Annual Update</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that it be noted that the Committee had reviewed the performance of the Board in its first year and its ability to review, develop and drive the Education and Skills key priorities	To continue to receive annual updates
4	26 May 2022	<b>The Impact of the School Improvement Team</b>	It was unanimously <b>RESOLVED</b> that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The performance of the team and their ability to develop the quality of education in Northumberland be noted;</li> <li>2. The changes to funding imposed by the DfE and the possible impact of service be noted;</li> <li>3. A further report be received once it was known how the reduced funding would be accounted for; and</li> <li>4. A recommendation be made to Cabinet for funding of the School Improvement Team to continue until the end of this Administration so that the team could continue to develop and offer support to schools both inside and outside of Northumberland</li> </ol>	A further report to be received at a later date
5	7 July 2022	<b>Send Strategy Progress Report</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted and the Committee supported the next steps to be taken.	To receive future updates

6	7 July 2022	<b>The Annual Report of Northumberland County Council Fostering Service 2021/22</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted and the performance information for the period April 2021 – March 2022 be acknowledged.	No further action
7	7 July 2022	<b>Briefing Note - Potential Multi Academy Trust Opportunity</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the briefing note be noted	No further action