

# 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, 28 September 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held in **COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL** on **THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2022** at **10.00 AM**.

Yours faithfully

Rick O'Farrell  
Interim Chief Executive

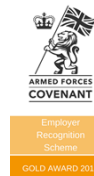
**To Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee members as follows:-**

**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 and 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  
- 8)

The minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on Thursday 8 September 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 Registerable Interest or Non Registerable 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 OF KEY DECISIONS**

(Pages 9  
- 22)

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

**5. REGIONAL SCHOOLS DIRECTOR OVERVIEW**

To receive an overview of the Regional Schools Director's (RSD) role and responsibilities.

**6. CABINET REPORT - OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION ON BERWICK CONSULTATION**

(Pages  
23 - 98)

The Cabinet report sets out the feedback arising from Phase 1 of informal consultation with stakeholders in the Berwick Partnership area and other relevant parties on models of organisation. As a result of feedback Cabinet is recommended to approve Phase 2 consultation the outcomes of which would be brought back to Cabinet at which stage Cabinet may be requested to approve the publication of statutory proposals. Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet on 11 October 2022.

**7. CABINET REPORT - SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION AND LODGINGS FOR CARE LEAVERS AND YOUNG HOMELESS - PERMISSION TO TENDER**

(Pages  
99 - 104)

The Cabinet report seeks permission to go to the market to commission a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties. Comments made by this Committee will be reported to Cabinet on 11 October 2022.

**8. THE NORTHUMBERLAND STRATEGIC INCLUSION PLAN 2022-2026**

(Pages  
105 -  
142)

The report presents to FACS members and particularly those members involved in the Exclusion Task and Finish Group, the first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy which has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

- 9. POST CABINET DECISION UPDATE: RDA RELOCATION FROM TRANWELL (PEGASUS CENTRE) TO KIRKLEY HALL CAMPUS (NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE)** (Pages 143 - 150)

The report sets out the progress made in preparing to deliver the capital project since approval being granted 8th March 2022.

- 10. FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT 2022/23** (Pages 151 - 160)

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

- 11. 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.

## Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
<b>Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation</b>	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
<b>Sponsorship</b>	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
<b>Contracts</b>	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
<b>Land and Property</b>	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
<b>Licenses</b>	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer
<b>Corporate tenancies</b>	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
<b>Securities</b>	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body



	<p>where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor’s knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</li> <li>ii. if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</li> </ul>
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\* ‘director’ includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

\* ‘securities’ means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

## Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:

- a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- b) any body
  - i. exercising functions of a public nature
  - ii. any body directed to charitable purposes or
  - iii. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

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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, 8 September 2022 at 2.00 pm.

#### PRESENT

R Dodd (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

#### COUNCILLORS

C Ball  
M Richardson  
T Thorne

C Dunbar  
M Swinburn  
A Watson

#### CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

A Hodgson  
P Rickeard

D Lennox

#### TEACHER UNION REPRESENTATIVES

J Sanderson

#### OFFICERS

C Angus  
S Aviston

S Barron

M Connor  
A Hartwell

A Kingham  
L Little  
G Reiter  
K Willis

Scrutiny Officer  
Head of School Organisation and  
Resources  
Strategic Lead for SEND & Designated  
Clinical Officer  
Head of Service, Children's Social Care  
Senior Manager - Performance and  
Systems Support  
Joint Interim Director of Children's Services  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Joint Interim Director of Children's Services  
Complaints Manager - Children and  
Education

#### ALSO PRESENT

G Renner-Thompson  
S May

Cabinet Member  
NE & NC ICB

Around 2 members of the press and public were present.

## 22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Dale, Daley and Fairless-Aitken. Apologies were also received from L Houghton.

## 23 **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 7 July 2022, as circulated, be agreed as a true record of each and be signed by the Chair.

Councillor Swinbank requested clarification be provided for the reason looked after children were placed outside of Northumberland following reports in the media. G Reiter confirmed that the media coverage had been in respect of a Freedom of Information request which provided figures for the previous 10 years and that information had been provided along with a great deal of other information. He confirmed that children were only placed outside of the Authority's area when it was the right place for a particular child and that could be for a number of reasons including the safety of a child, or that a child was placed with a family member who lived outside of the area.

## 24 **FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

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

An introduction to the report was provided by A Hartwell, Senior Manager - Performance and Systems Support with the headlines outlined.

In response to questions the following information was provided:-

- The projected overspend for Education and Skills was entirely related to home to school transport. Backdated payments of an 8.9% increase had been made to providers in order to secure travel for students and ensure that there was no drop-off of contractors. The overspend had been secured through the budget and the overspend would be built into next year's budget.
- The percentage of pupils in secondary schools in schools judged to be good or outstanding equated to 16,600 to 16,800 students as figures fluctuated out of a school population of 22,600. It was a key priority to reduce the number of pupils in schools judged to be less than good, however it was highlighted that whilst a school may need to improve that some students within those schools continue to perform well.

- It was clarified that the split in pupil numbers in academies or maintained schools judged to be good or outstanding was 79.9% pupils for academies and 80.5% for maintained school as judged at their last inspection, however some of these inspections were some time ago. These figures equated to approximately 36,000 pupils which meant that approximately 8,000 students were in schools which were currently not judged to be good or outstanding.

**RESOLVED** that the current performance and how it compared to benchmarks was noted.

## 26 **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE COQUET PARTNERSHIP - UPDATED REPORT**

S Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources provided a comprehensive introduction to the report advising that the response to the consultation had been low which was usual when they were in agreement with the proposals. She highlighted the positive responses to the proposals for additional SEND places within the partnership, which Councillor Renner-Thompson, Portfolio holder for Children's Services, highlighted was a key priority for the Administration.

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

- In consultation with the Headteachers and Governing bodies of schools within the partnership it had been agreed that one consultation event should be held in Amble. Transport had been provided from other areas but had not been utilised by parents.
- The reduction of £2m from the Astley budget had been made due to the original proposals being for three schools to be provided on the one site, however this was changed following the consultation within that partnership and the decision to retain Seaton Sluice Middle School on its current site. Officers were confident that the plans were affordable and deliverable within the revised budget. As previously highlighted to the Committee, Seaton Sluice Middle School was not in poor condition and should any repairs be required then these costs would be met from separate grant funding.
- The timescale had been proposed to ensure that the transition was as smooth as possible with time allowed to ensure that necessary refurbishment work to the existing middle school was carried out prior to the relocation on the site of Amble First School.
- The budget costs had inflation predictions built in and was based on recent experience of delivering new school building projects.

Councillor Renner-Thompson highlighted that James Calvert Spence College had just been judged to be good in the recently published Ofsted report, which had been down to the hard work of the Headteacher and staff.

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

P. Rickeard joined the meeting at this point.

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

K Willis, Complaints Manager for Children's Services provided an introduction to the report with the aid of a power point presentation. In response to a question it was clarified that the Complaints Manager regularly attended the Regional Complaints Managers Forum which fed into the National Forum, and there were often webinars regarding learning and good practice and also training offered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO ). Unfortunately due to the way in which data had been provided by the LGSCO this year, it was difficult to provide benchmarking specifically related to Children's Services against other authorities, however it was hoped this could be done through the Regional Forum going forward.

Members welcomed the positive report.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

28 **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT**

The report which shared the content and findings of the children's social care self-assessment was required to be provided by Ofsted and would form the basis of the annual conversation with them. An introduction was provided by G Reiter, Joint Interim Director of Children's Services with the aid of a power point presentation. Continuing improvements in the quality of practice were evidenced despite key ongoing challenges of workforce retention and increasing demand. The areas for further improvement were highlighted along with the priorities for the continuous improvement plan for 2022/23.

Members welcomed the report and recognised the continuing difficulties encountered in the recruitment of experienced social workers across the country as a whole. They particularly highlighted the continuing success of the AYSE academy and that staff stated that training was good and that they felt supported in what was recognised as an extremely challenging role.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

The Chair advised that he would re-order the agenda from this point to provide a more coherent approach.

29 **URGENT BUSINESS - OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT TO NORTHUMBERLAND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

G Reiter advised that a letter summarising the findings of a focussed visit to Northumberland Children's services on 26 and 27 July 2022 had been published after the agenda had been published, however he felt that it would be timely for this to be brought to the attention of Members. A copy of the letter had been

circulated in advance of the meeting and would be uploaded to the Council's website. The focussed visit had been in relation to the local authority's arrangements for planning and achieving permanence with a range of evidence interrogated. The comments set out in the headline findings were highlighted and were very much welcomed by Officers and Members and the two areas identified for improvement would be addressed, however it was noted that these were more in relation to information recording and not the impact of the service on children.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

## 30 **FAMILY HUB DEVELOPMENT**

M. Connor, Head of Service, Children's Social Care provided an introduction to the report which gave an update in relation to the DfE funding for the Family Hub developments within Northumberland, advising that Northumberland had been selected as one of the 75 local authorities who could receive additional funding to develop the offer. The expectations were outlined and it was confirmed that feedback from engagement work undertaken had been positive.

In response to questions from Members the following information was noted:-

- It was clarified that two Family Hub buildings would be provided in Blyth for the south east locality, however outreach work would be provided across the whole locality, including Cramlington working with other organisations.
- Following the reopening of buildings following covid new partners and services had moved into buildings over the last twelve months, such as midwifery into Ashington and Blyth West buildings offering clinics. Primary mental health services had also been moved into some buildings along with some health visitors, however the services were not all office based and the shared space offered the opportunity of hot desking for other services and would able a better use of the available space. VCS organisations could also use buildings on evenings/ weekends it was more about the co-location of services providing a wrap-around offer. Outreach work would also be undertaken and there would be other community venues used.
- The 15 Children's Centres within the County were morphing into the new Hubs and rebranding etc would happen and work would be undertaken with other partners regarding the use of other spaces.
- Different ways of working would be trialled and any impact evidenced to ensure the best use of resources to provide a system transformation.
- In respect of the Blyth west building there was agreement to rent until at least the end of March and negotiations were underway with Barnardo's going forward.

Whilst Members welcomed the development of the Family Hubs, there was some concern regarding the conflicting uses of the buildings and if they would become more formal spaces rather than being informal spaces that could be used by families. It was stated that Members were welcome to visit any of the Hubs to see how they were being used by families.

**RESOLVED** that the Committee:-

1. Agree to proceed with the funding for the Family Hub offer; and
2. Support the development of the governance and wider processes to underpin this as outlined in the report.

31 **PROPOSAL IN RELATION TO FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE YOUTH SERVICE**

M Connor, Head of Service, Children's Social Care provided an introduction to the report which provided an overview of a recent review of the activity and impact of the Youth Service and proposal for the future needs of the service linked to the development of the Family Hub model. The report outlined the two options for the future of the service with a recommendation that Option 1 be agreed as the best option and fit within the corporate priorities.

It was clarified that there were outreach workers, the exact number was not known in the meeting but could be made available for anyone interested and their use varied in different areas working with VCS to make the best use of resources in the County. In Blyth they worked closely with Silx.

In response to a concern that this would impact young people; put more pressure on already stretched organisations who relied on volunteers; not provide help to identify issues at an early stage and only respond when intervention was necessary, it was stated that this would join up a range of provision in an integrated way and build on work already being undertaken with families and other professionals within the Family Hubs, allowing earlier identification of where help was needed. The proposals would reduce duplication of services and provide the most effective use of the resources available to maximise effectiveness.

**RESOLVED** that :-

- The activity undertaken during the review be noted; and
- Option 1, as outlined in the report, be agreed as the way forward.

32 **MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHUMBERLAND**

An introduction to the report, which gave a current overview of support for children and young people with mental health needs and detailed future plans, was provided by S Barron, SEND Strategic Lead and Designated Clinical Officer with the aid of a power point presentation. S May, CYP Operational Commissioning Manager from NE & NC ICB) was also in attendance.

In response to an earlier question regarding ADHD, 3-5% of the childhood population had a diagnoses of ADHD in Northumberland the diagnostic service was provided by the Children and Young Peoples Service in CNTW.



**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report and the future plans be noted and the support now on offer for children and young people in Northumberland be recognised.

33 **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.

Councillor Ball asked that the issue of school uniforms be raised as a matter of urgency as there had been a number of problems within schools since the beginning of the new school year. A Kingham provided assurance that this would be reinforced with Headteachers at meetings, however the responsibility for the setting of uniform rules was with individual schools. The issue would be brought to the attention of Councillor Daley, Chair.

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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## Forward Plan

### FORTHCOMING CABINET DECISIONS SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2022

DECISION	PROPOSED SCRUTINY DATE	CABINET DATE
<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.</p> <p>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</p>	N/A	13 September 2022

<p>consent. (C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)</p>		
<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 support potential strategic plans and policies for the area, and to promote its conservation and regeneration. (C. Horncastle/S, Rushton 01670 622650)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>13 September 2022</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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>13 September 2022</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. (W. Ploszaj/Lara Baker - 07919 217457)</p>		
<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> 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. This project is part of the Energising Blyth Regeneration</p>	N/A	13 September 2022

<p>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>		
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of June 2022</b> 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> 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> 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>	N/A	13 September 2022
<p><b>Proposals for the Coquet Partnership</b></p>	FACS OSC	13 September 2022

<p>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>8 September 2022</p>	
<p><b>Proposals for the allocation of the Public Health ring-fenced grant reserve</b></p> <p>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>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</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing OSC 6 September 2022</p>	<p>13 September 2022</p>

<p>score was given if the goal was primary prevention (preventing illness or maintaining health), in line with public health principles. (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> 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>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</p>	<p>FACS OSC 8 September 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>



<p>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><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>	N/A	11 October 2022
<p><b>Northumberland Destination Management Plan</b> Destination Management is a process of leading, influencing and coordinating the management of all the aspects of a destination that contribute to a visitor’s experience, taking account of the needs of visitors, local residents, businesses and the environment. A Destination Management Plan (DMP) is a shared statement of intent to manage a destination over a stated period of time, articulating the roles of the different stakeholders and identifying clear actions that they will take and the apportionment of resources. This report requests that the County Council endorse the Vision, Partnership Principles, Strategic Aims, and Priorities of the 10 year DMP for Northumberland. (J. Watson/Nigel Walsh 07789654472)</p>	C&P OSC 5 October 2022	11 October 2022
<p><b>Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation</b> This report sets out the feedback received from stakeholders arising from Phase 1 of informal consultation with</p>	FACS OSC 6 October 2022	11 October 2022

<p>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><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>Communities and Place OSC 26 October 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>
<p><b>Supported Accommodation and Lodgings for Care Leavers and Young Homeless</b></p> <p>The report seeks permission from Cabinet to go to the market</p>	<p>FACS OSC 6 October 2022</p>	<p>11 October 2022</p>

<p>to commission a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties.</p> <p>The Council has a responsibility to provide support and accommodation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looked After young people and Care leavers under the Children Act 1989;</li> <li>• Young people presenting as homeless and needing accommodation in line with the Statutory guidance - Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation</li> <li>• Separated children (formally known as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children);</li> <li>• Young people who require support after the age of 18 in line with the Staying Put agenda.</li> <li>• Other young people aged 16 and above who are beyond school leaving age who may require provision under this service as and when they meet varying Local Authority thresholds.</li> </ul> <p>The intention is to create a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which will allow the Council to contract with a range of pre-qualified suppliers, supporting access to a range of placements across the County for eligible young people. Unlike a framework arrangement, a DPS allows suppliers to join at pre-agreed points of time, encouraging competition and making it easier for local suppliers to access the arrangement. This will support the Council in meeting its duties during a time of change; Ofsted regulation for this</p>		
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<p>sector is due to introduced in late 2023 and is expected to cause some disruption within the marketplace as providers determine whether they are willing and able to meet the new guidelines. A DPS will create a more flexible solution providing the Council with improved access to suppliers in order to meet need. (G. Renner Thompson/M. Connor 07833 437064)</p>		
<p><b>Working together with VCSE – Non recurrent variation to VCSE Infrastructure Contract</b> This purpose of this report is to seek approval to expand the current Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) 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>		11 October 2022
<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>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 7 November 2022</p>	8 November 2022
<p><b>Leisure Service Review</b> This report presents the findings and recommendations from the leisure service review.</p>		8 November 2022

<p>(J. Watson/ M. Taylor - 01670 622430)  <b>(Confidential report)</b></p>		
<p><b>Market Position Statement</b>  The report will ask Cabinet to approve the publication of the updated Adult Social Care Market Position Statement.  (W. Pattison/A. Curry 07557948621)</p>	<p>H&amp;W OSC 1 November 2022</p>	<p>8 November 2022</p>
<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>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC  12 December 2022</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>
<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>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>
<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 companies for 2022-23  (R. Wearmouth/M. Calvert - 01670 620197)  (Confidential report)</p>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC  12 December 2022</p>	<p>13 December 2022</p>

<p><b>Recommissioning of an Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service for Adults in Northumberland</b></p> <p>To seek permission from Cabinet to commission an Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service for Adults in Northumberland. This Service will be commissioned using the Public Health Ring-Fenced Grant. The grant conditions state that Local Authorities must improve the take up of, and outcomes from, its drug and alcohol misuse treatment services, based on an assessment of local need. The contract will be greater than £2m, therefore there is the need to ask Cabinet to delegate the expenditure to the Director of Public Health. (A. Pattison/John Liddell M: 07929 775559)</p>	<p>H&amp;W OSC 6 December 2022</p>	<p>10 January 2023</p>
<p><b>Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27</b></p> <p>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>	<p>Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC 13 February 2022</p>	<p>14 February 2022 Council 22 February 2022</p>
<p><b>Financial Performance 2022-23 - Position at the end of December 2022</b></p> <p>The report will provide Cabinet with the revenue and capital financial performance against budget as at 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>14 March 2023</p>

(R. Wearmouth/K. Harvey - 01670 624783)		
<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)	N/A	9 May 203

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## Northumberland County Council

### **CABINET**

**Date: 11 October 2022**

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#### **The Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Partnership Organisation**

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 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.

This report sets out the findings of Phase 1 consultation and as a result of feedback received, Cabinet is recommended to approve Phase 2 consultation with stakeholders in the area served by Berwick Partnership and other interested parties on specific proposals for individual schools in the partnership within both a 3-tier and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, including some school closures. This would consist of a 15-week (school weeks) consultation beginning on 31 October 2022.

The outcomes of Phase 2 consultation would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date, at which point Cabinet may be requested to approve the publication of statutory proposals.

#### **Recommendations**

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

- 1) Review the feedback from the Phase 1 pre-Consultation set at paras. 21-54 when coming to the next stage decision.

- 2) Take into consideration that Phase 1 consultation began on 23 May and was extended to 12 August to allow sufficient time for interested parties to respond.
- 3) Approve the Phase 1 consultation has identified significant support for both the current 3-tier and the 2-tier (primary/secondary) systems of school organisation.
- 4) Approve the initiation of Phase 2 pre-consultation for 15 school weeks setting out specific proposals for individual schools in the Berwick Partnership within both the 3-tier and 2-tier structure of organisation as set out at paras. 56 and 57, in the light of the significant support expressed for both models of organisation by consultees and taking into account the wider issues of viability and sustainability of schools, post-16 and post-18 provision, improved educational outcomes and capital investment in school buildings.
- 5) As part of Phase 2 pre-consultation, approve consultation on the proposals set out at para. 59 to establish additional SEND provision within the Berwick area specifically to address the growing number of children and young people being diagnosed with a primary special educational need in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Autism (ASD).
- 6) Approve the draft proposed models of school organisation within both the 3-tier and 2-tier structures suggested as the basis for consultation, including proposals for school closures.
- 7) Note the £39.896 million already identified in the Council's medium-term financial plan for investment in schools in the Berwick Partnership, including for the replacement and remodelling of Berwick Academy.
- 8) Approve expenditure of up to £250k for the development of the outline business case in relation to recommendation 7.
- 9) Delegate the decision to undertake further consultation on the proposal, if necessary, to the Joint Interim Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 10) Note that local authorities do not have powers to propose or change the organisation of academies; therefore, any proposed changes to the organisation of Berwick Academy and St. Cuthbert's Catholic First School as part of a wider partnership reorganisation would need to be consulted on by the Trustees of those academies and taken to the Regional Schools Director for a decision.
- 11) Be aware should Cabinet approve a second stage of consultation, the outcomes presented to Cabinet may include a recommendation to permit the publication of statutory proposals in relation to relevant maintained schools, including closure proposals.

### **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 12 April 2022 Cabinet approved the initiation of Phase 1 of pre-statutory consultation on whether schools, parents and the wider community of stakeholders with an interest in the Berwick area preferred the current 3-tier organisation of schools in the partnership or whether they believed a 2-tier(primary/secondary) organisation of schools would be better placed to address the issues facing the partnership.
2. The background and rationale for the Phase 1 pre-consultation are set out fully in the Report of The Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 12 April 2022, provided in the Background Papers to this report.
3. Phase 1 pre-consultation began on 23 May and concluded at midnight on 12 August 2022; this equated to 11 weeks, 8 of which were within school term-time in line with DfE guidance. The method and format used to carry out consultation is set out at paras. 14 to 20, while the feedback and analysis are summarised in paras. 21 to 52.
4. As the feedback received from schools, parents and other interested parties during Phase 1 pre-consultation indicated that there was significant support for both the 3-tier and the 2-tier systems within the partnership, Cabinet is recommended to approve the initiation of Phase 2 pre-consultation setting out specific proposals for individual schools both within a 3-tier and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) organisation of schools.
5. It is proposed that Phase 2 pre-consultation would last for 15 school weeks, commencing on 31 October 2022 until 3 March 2023. It is envisaged that this extensive consultation period would enable all interested parties sufficient time to respond effectively, as well as enabling officers to carry out the required number of school meetings and public events with contingency for rescheduling where necessary, for example due to inclement weather.
6. The Phase 2 pre-consultation would include the development of an online consultation document via the Council's Citizen Space facility, with hard copies available on request. The link to the consultation document would be sent directly to those Governors, staff and parents relevant to those schools most directly impacted; however, it would also be made available on the Council's website to enable any interested party to respond. A 'padlet' containing additional information and Frequently Asked Questions would also be set up as part of the consultation process.

In addition to the models of school organisation and proposed SEND provision set out at paras. 56, 57 and 59, the Phase 2 consultation would focus on a range of factors, including:

- Viability and sustainability of schools, including finance
- Educational outcomes
- Catchment areas
- Buildings
- Home to School Transport
- Impact on staff of schools and academies
- Sport and Recreation

- Rurality and wider community issues
7. A report setting out the results of Phase 2 pre-consultation, should it be approved, would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date. A request to publish statutory proposals on changes to schools in the Berwick Partnership may also be included in that report, including possible school closure proposals.

## Background Information

8. The Council has allocated £39.896 million in capital funding within its Medium-Term financial Plan for capital investment in education within the Berwick partnership of schools.
9. Before committing to such investment in these schools, it was agreed that assurance would need to be sought that the organisational structure within the Berwick Partnership is viable and sustainable in the medium to long-term through the retention of the majority of students in all phases, and that the agreed structure is the most likely to lead to improved educational outcomes for all children and young people in the Berwick area.
10. Council officers began working with headteachers in the Berwick Partnership in April 2021 and over a 12-month period in workshops and meetings explored a number of possible models of organisation that would meet this requirement, including the current 3-tier model structure. In addition, the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership was also discussed.
11. Throughout the work undertaken with the Berwick Partnership, headteachers and school governors understood that whatever structure was ultimately agreed, this possibly would have to be within the context of some other fundamental changes, such as a reduction in the current number of schools in the partnership, including some schools moving to other partnerships as noted at para. 3. The issues facing the partnership that would necessitate the need for changes to the current organisation of schools in Berwick are:
- Education Outcomes (note overall results for middle schools and Berwick Academy in summer 2022 are not yet verified and are not included in the information below):
    - While KS1 assessments are not published, all but one of the 13 first and primary schools are graded Outstanding or Good by Ofsted.
    - Based on the last verified results in 2019, middle schools in the Berwick Partnership and Belford Primary have above average scores at KS2 and (although Glendale Middle results are slightly below average) at the end of Year 6. All 3 middle schools are graded 'Good' by Ofsted.
    - Berwick Academy's GCSE results in 2019
      - Grade 5 in English and Maths (strong pass) - 21% compared to Northumberland and England average of 43%
      - Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores were below the Northumberland and England average
      - The school has reported improved outcomes in these measures in 2020 and 2021, although these are not able to be compared to 2019 due to differences in assessment.

- Berwick Academy’s ‘A’ level results in 2019
  - Progress score was the same as the average for England
  - The average grade was a D+, compared to the Northumberland and England average grades of C+
- Viability and Sustainability of schools and surplus places
  - The number of children being born within the Berwick Partnership area has been falling for a number of years and is predicted to continue (see Table1):

**Table 1**

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

- There are already significant surplus places in first schools in the partnership, with 182 pupils on roll in Reception in January 2022 with capacity for 293 pupils in schools. As can be seen from Table 1, these surplus places are predicted to increase in the coming years and schools will compete more and more for pupils. As cohorts move through the school phases, the middle and high schools will also feel the impact of falling pupil numbers on their budgets. Currently there are 4 schools forecast to be in deficit budget by 2024/25, with 8 forecast to be in deficit by 2025/26 - 9 schools currently have an in-year deficit.
- Compounding the fall in pupil numbers is the continuing drift of pupils into neighbouring partnerships, into Scotland and into private education (see Table 2):

**Table 2**

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

The above data equates to 28% of high school (Year 9 to Year 11) students living in the Berwick area choosing to attend other schools. Of students in the Berwick area of middle school age, 10% choose to attend these schools; at first school phase, just 4% of pupils living in the Berwick area attend these schools. In economic terms, at high school phase these student numbers equates to around £915k while at middle school phase this equates to £470k.

While there will be a variety of reasons why students attend certain schools, for example distance from home being a factor, while some parents would send their children to private schools in any event. However, some feedback received during the informal meetings with schools, via the community survey in Autumn 2021 and

from Phase 1 consultation indicates there is a level of dissatisfaction with the offer at high school phase and some parents are choosing an alternative pathway even earlier in their children's educational journey.

12. A high-level survey was also carried out with the wider Berwick Partnership community in Autumn 2021 to gauge their key priorities when considering school organisation in the area and to assist in formulating the next steps in the process.
13. As a result of the work undertaken with schools and the initial community survey, Cabinet was recommended to approve Phase 1 pre-consultation with all stakeholders and interested parties on whether the current 3-tier or 2-tier (primary/secondary) structures would be the most likely to achieve long-term viability and sustainability for education in the partnership, as these had been identified as the two preferred models of organisation.

### **The Phase 1 Pre-Consultation Process**

14. Phase 1 pre-consultation began on 23 May and closed on 12 August, with the purpose of ascertaining from schools, parents and all interested parties whether they believed the current 3-tier system or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) model of school organisation would be better placed to achieve improved educational outcomes throughout the educational pathway of students in the area and that would also support viable and sustainable schools by retaining more students in Berwick schools up to the end of Year 13.
15. A consultation register of relevant stakeholders was drawn up and is included at Appendix 2 of this report.
16. A consultation document was developed, including a questionnaire, setting out data and information relating to schools including Ofsted gradings, education outcomes and pupil data and information. The document also set out data and information relating to the growth in the need for specialist provision in the Berwick area, particularly in relation to children and young people with primary needs in SEMH and ASD. The document also asked consultees if they had any views on the sufficiency of provision in early years and post-16 and post-18 education. The full document is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
17. 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 libraries in the Berwick area.
18. In addition, a dedicated consultation 'padlet' was set up to hold the consultation document, frequently asked questions and other relevant information for stakeholders.
19. Council officers ran two public events during the consultation period and one event for school staff only as follows:
  - 13 July - Public event in Belford
  - 14 July – Staff only event in Berwick
  - 16 July - Public event in Berwick

20. Council Officers and Headteachers were on hand throughout the events to assist with questions, queries or provide additional information where necessary. The two public events were attended by 32 parents and members of the community, 16 staff members and 10 governors. The staff only event was attended by 28 members of staff and three governors.

### **Feedback from Phase 1 Pre-consultation**

21. This section of the report summaries the feedback from Phase 1 pre-consultation on the substantive question of whether the current 3-tier organisation of schools or a 2-tier (primary/secondary) model would be better placed to address the issues facing Berwick Partnership outlined in para. 11.
22. A total of 365 (347 online and 18 written) responses were received to the Phase 1 consultation. For context, there were 2,323 pupils on roll in Berwick schools in Reception to Year 13 in January 2022.
23. Responses from the Governing Bodies of schools were as follows (full responses are included in the Background Papers to this report):
24. Belford Primary School

The Governing Body of Belford Primary School is unanimously in favour of Belford Primary School becoming an official member of the Alnwick Partnership. The reasons for this decision are:

- Since becoming a primary school none of the children have progressed to Berwick.
- To enable smooth transition for children, staff attend meetings in Alnwick as well as Berwick, even though no children transition to Berwick, and this greatly increases the demands on staffs' time.
- There is very little difference in distance between Belford/Alnwick and Belford/Berwick however parents don't benefit from free home-to-school transport to their choice of school only because Belford is officially part of the Berwick Partnership.

Regarding the proposals to change the arrangement for schooling in Berwick the governors felt that it was for the schools in Berwick and surrounding area to express their views on the proposed changes.

An extract from their response states:

*"We know that this has been a contentious issue for generations of parents and children attending our school and feel it is only right that the proposal for us to become part of the Alnwick Partnership is now approved."*

25. Berwick St Mary's CE First School

The Governing Body supports the proposal to move towards a 2-tier system of education. We are aware of the work, information shared and discussion of options

available and feel the 2-tier model offers the best opportunities for children and families in the future.

An extract from their response states:

*“We firmly believe St Mary’s is well equipped to meet the need of the transition, with both the staff and provision suited to continuing to provide an excellent education to the children and families we serve.”*

26. Holy Trinity CE First School

The Governing Body stated that Holy Trinity is a popular school, well-respected by parents and the community, with a strong offer so the governors are confident it would continue to thrive in either system.

Governors’ previous response was felt to be solely for 3-tier. However, the governors did not rule out 2-tier, but would have liked a more detailed model to be put forward before they could fully support it. The proposal is vague and the governors questioned whether it would result in better outcomes.

An extract from their response states:

*“We have said all along that we would be willing to go primary (and think we could do so successfully) if that was proven to be the will of parents and in the best interest of students.”*

27. Lowick CE and Holy Island CE First Schools (Federated Governing Body)

The Federated Governing Body of Lowick and Holy Island First Schools feel that they have the appropriate team, leadership and premises to make 2-tier work well. Children would have the chance to mature for two more years before a key transition and allow Holy Island children to be educated locally before moving to Longridge.

An extract from their response states:

*“It will bring our partnership into line with north of the border and south of our area.”*

28. Hugh Joicey CE First School

The Governing Body of Hugh Joicey First School believe there is a real potential for Ford in terms of changes into Primary particularly as a rural school in the west of the partnership.

An extract from their response states:

*“There is no change from the preference and this will benefit Ford best out of all of the options. Preserving a rural presence for children to undertake either First or Primary is of utmost importance with links to the community and church.”*

29. Norham St Ceolwulf’s CE First School



The Governing Body of Norham St Ceolwulf's CE First School feels it would be in the best interests of our community and the education of our children if the school went primary. It believes that it has the capacity to successfully transition into a primary setting and provide an excellent and full key stage 2 experience.

An extract from their response states:

*"The majority of Governors believe becoming a primary school will enable our children to be better prepared for their next stage of education, as staff will be able to fully support the expectations of key stage 2, whilst at the same time providing the continued pastoral excellence of our village setting, which caters for the needs of children/community of the Tweed Valley."*

### 30. Scremerston First School

The Governing Body's consensus is that 3-tier works well in Berwick and that would be the system the Governors would like to keep if possible, with the necessary adjustments due to falling rolls.

An extract from their response states:

*"However, if the final decision is to go 2-tier in Berwick, we feel that our site is flexible enough and has space to accommodate additional year groups relatively easily."*

### 31. Spittal First School

The Governing Body of Spittal First School believes that schools in the Berwick Partnership should be organised within a 3-tier structure. The first and middle schools are, in the majority, good and produce results in line with or above national averages. Extending the academy year groups downwards to include years 7 and 8 does not automatically guarantee improved standards and risks adversely affecting the current standards of attainment.

In relation to Glendale Middle and Wooler First Schools the governors believe the schools should remain in the Berwick Partnership. However, if the majority of pupils currently transfer to Alnwick the schools should move partnership but this could impact further on numbers in the Berwick Academy catchment, adding to financial pressures. The governors also believe that Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership for the same reasons, but stated that this should be a decision made by these individual schools.

In order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD within Berwick the governors suggested investment in new purpose built provision for The Grove School and investment in SEMH/ASD provision within the Berwick partnership.

The governors stated there should be a wider range of Post-16 opportunities based in Berwick so the children do not have to travel. This includes access to a broader range of experiences and opportunities which link to industries in the area (including the wider North East area).

An extract from their response states:

*“However, as far as Spittal School is concerned we are prepared to accommodate children under either a two or three tier system.”*

32. St Cuthbert’s RC First School

The Governing Body of St Cuthbert’s RC First School supported the 2-tier option.

An extract from their response states:

*“At our local Governing Board meeting held on June 27th the general consensus was that we all support the 2-tier option.”*

33. Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Prior Park First School are of the opinion that the partnership should change to 2-tier education. It is better for the children to have fewer changes of schools during their education, the move is better placed at the end of a key stage and the children have more time to settle into secondary school before having to choose GCSE options. Economics of being a primary school would enable them the resources to provide the better breadth and depth of learning.

Governors believed that the moves of Glendale Middle, Wooler First or Belford Primary Schools from Berwick to Alnwick Partnership was a decision for those schools, and their governing bodies, to make after full consultations with their stakeholders.

Governors understand and support the need for additional resources, including staff and premises, to meet the needs of the growing number of children assessed as having SEMH and ASD within Berwick. Children should be able to receive their education close to their home community.

The Governing Body is aware that the falling birth rate is having an effect on surplus places within early years provisions and know the challenges this presents to existing nurseries, both school and private providers. We believe that the local authority should be facilitating more discussion on this topic as part of the next stage of planned organisation of education within the Berwick Partnership as it will impact on the finances of some Primary Schools.

The Governors were pleased to see the improvements in secondary education and recognise the value of these improvements continuing to provide an important part of Post-16 education in Berwick. The relative isolation of Berwick does mean plans for wider post-16 education will have to be made on a broader regional, rather than just a local perspective

An extract from their response states:

*“We would like to stress the urgency of clear plans for the future of education within the Berwick Partnership. Our school will not be alone in having to make very difficult financial choices in the next year that could cause unnecessary damage to the education of our pupils and hurt members of our staff if we do not have a clear plan in place. We must all recognise that difficult decisions must be made about merging or*

*closing well-loved schools alongside the pleasure of bringing new investment in enhanced educational facilities to Berwick.”*

34. Tweedmouth West First School

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth West First School are unanimous in their opposition to moving to a 2-tier system.

As a priority the governors want the facilities at the Grove School to significantly increase in capacity to meet the needs of the community. The specialist support provided by the Grove school is an asset to be proud of. Governors also want to see the issues within the Academy tackled appropriately and believe both the Grove School and the Academy require new suitable buildings in order to achieve this.

Governors raised concerns of the lack of robust scientific, independent assessment and evidence. Interviewing all stakeholders (community members, parents, school employees and students) and thematically analysing the results to come to reliable conclusions in order to specify where the issues lie and why they exist, would allow evidence-based solutions to be drawn (eg. is community opinion of the academy a problem, or is it the culture within the academy?) Both issues would be tackled very differently. Why, specifically, are parents sending their children elsewhere? Governors cannot assume we know. Broad consultations and questionnaires, mixing problems and solutions, are not specific enough.

Concerns over staff wellbeing was discussed throughout this process. Job insecurity leads to increased work-related stress, which, according to the HSE, is the biggest cause of absenteeism in the UK. Employers are legally responsible for preventing and not contributing to work-related stress and carrying out stress risk-assessments, where possible.

An extract from their response states:

*“As things stand, currently we are not convinced that a move to a two-tier system is the correct decision. Rather, we believe a two-tier system is likely to create more issues than it may solve for our unique and rural arm of Northumberland and would not build on the successes and positive elements that we already have. Namely, our first schools, middle schools and the Grove School.”*

35. Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools (Federated Governing Body)

The Federated Governing Body of Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools supported the 2-tier option.

An extract from their response states:

*“Our governors and I can confirm that our view remains the same with regards to structure for our schools here in Wooler - primary/secondary being the preference.”*

36. Berwick Middle School

Berwick Middle School Governors are firmly of the opinion that the Berwick Partnership should remain 3-tier. The schools in Berwick are part of a highly successful 3-tier partnership and our children benefit from outstanding pastoral support in all our schools. Ofsted have rated almost all of our eighteen local schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and two have been rated 'Requires Improvement' but they are improving quickly.

Children in middle schools' benefit from the nurturing environment and achieve success in their learning through an exciting, stimulating curriculum and from all the extra-curricular events and activities they are involved in. The ethos is to give children as many 'first-time' experiences as possible, to develop a love of learning all round and a passion for the subjects they find personally engaging.

Middle schools have specialist subject staff with the expertise and experience to shape the curriculum for Year 5 and 6, guide class teaching and target children's learning ready for the key stage 2 SATs tests. Subject specialists also have an overview of the GCSE curriculum for their area so are ideally placed to shape the curriculum for Year 7 and 8 pupils, targeting children's learning towards GCSE in readiness for when children move on to study GCSE subjects at the high school.

In the 2019 SATs tests Berwick Middle performed above both Northumberland and national averages. Data also shows that the attainment of pupils in a 3-tier system is above the national average and nationally middle school pupils go on to do better in their GCSEs.

Middle school children go through many social, emotional and physical changes in those crucial four years and at Berwick Middle they receive excellent pastoral support which ensures they thrive. They leave, at the end of Year 8, well prepared to move to their high school. Under a 2-tier system they switch to a high school at age 11, ready or not!

Under 2-tier there is a very strong focus on achieving results in English and Maths in the key stage 2 SATs tests and there can be less focus on the broad curriculum that pupils need. When pupils transfer to secondary school there can again be, right from the start, a very strong focus on achieving GCSE results even though that's five years away. Pupils can be deprived of the rich curriculum they need to make informed GCSE choices.

An extract from their response states:

*"A move to the 2-tier system in Berwick would mean:*

- *our Middle School age children losing the diversity of educational experiences in their enriching curriculum*
- *a protracted changeover period of perhaps several years with new builds, moves, restructuring etc.*
- *disrupting the educational experience of very high numbers of our children during all that changeover*
- *a reduction in parent choice for our children*

### 37. Tweedmouth Middle School

Tweedmouth Middle School's Governing Body submitted a 26 page response to the consultation and it is summarised below. Overall, the Governing Body believes that the current 3-tier structure will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard viability for future generations.

They state that the most successful model is that of the independent sector where there is a middle (*Preparatory Common Entrance – 9-13 year olds*) and high (*senior/college – 13-18 year olds*) school system. Here it is held that 11-13 years olds do better in the top two years of a 'middle school' setting than in the bottom two years of a 'high school' setting. Why should our existing middle schools, already rated good by Ofsted, not continue to flourish in a thriving 3-tier system. Certainly, at Tweedmouth Middle School, we have colleagues and contacts with significant independent sector 'middle school' framework experience which means that we know we are already working well towards that goal.

With regards to alternative options for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership. Tweedmouth Middle School is wholeheartedly committed to supporting fully the strong vision for a successful school which sees Tweedmouth Middle continuing to thrive, as a middle school, as part of a flourishing 3-tier system. It is our aim to ensure it duly receives the recognition it deserves for becoming the Ofsted outstanding rated school we know it can be.

Governors felt convinced that a move to the 2-tier primary/secondary system is not only wholly unnecessary but risks exacerbating the issues facing Berwick of financially sustainable viability and educational outcomes.

By consolidating existing first schools into the most financially and sustainably viable of their existing premises and by including as much 2-4 year old pre-reception provision as possible the issue of surplus places in first schools would be addressed whilst retaining the current first school phase. This addresses the financial sustainability of first schools. Currently the town's middle schools are fairly full and financially well managed. Therefore, there is no case for re-organising them on the grounds of financially sustainable viability.

Berwick Academy is clearly not financially sustainably viable. The issue is that there are 183 high school aged students attending schools out of the Berwick partnership and this number doesn't include the number of sixth form students attending other schools but also VI<sup>th</sup> form colleges in Newcastle. By re-organising the Berwick partnership to follow the 2-tier system it would couple flagging numbers of Year 9 to 13 students with thriving numbers of Years 7 to 8 students from middle school thus bring the 'new' secondary school close to that of the current capacity of the high school and obviating the need to 'attract back' or 'recapture' the number of students travelling to other schools. Governors feel this is an insufficiently unambitious way of attempting to deal with the financially unsustainable Academy and does a disservice to our young people.

Governors also highlighted concerns about the erroneous assumptions about key stage (Year 7 and 8) education in middle schools, and the mistaken impression that poor GCSE results at the high school stemmed from slippage in standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8 in middle schools. It is not true. To deploy the argument that GCSE success lies in students beginning secondary school in Year 7 so that the school has a full five years to drill children to get the highest marks, when they sit their exams, is wholly wrong and anti-educational. GCSE courses are designed to be delivered over the course of two years (Years 10 and 11). In majority of schools this is preceded by a “taster” year where the timetabled curriculum is devised to include lessons in the full range of subjects the school offers. Whilst this does facilitate “getting ahead” with the GCSE specification it is ludicrous to suggest that a school needs to begin that process from the start of Year 7. Research shows that middle schools prepare Years 7 and 8 pupils for GCSE significantly better than secondary schools do.

Tweedmouth Prior Park First School, other than Berwick Academy, is the only school within the partnership to have an Ofsted rating less than ‘good’. However, any potential shortfall in educational outcomes is no longer discernible given the Ofsted rating of ‘good’ for middle schools and the above County and national expected standards for KS2.

Tweedmouth Middle School Governors believes that to address the financial viability of the high school, it requires Berwick Academy to deliver what will ‘attract back/recapture’ those students leaving the area. A re-organised secondary school, within a 2-tier system, and bolstered financially from funding generated by Year 7 and 8 students from closed-down middle schools will, by no means, guarantee improvements in ‘Educational Outcomes’. Governors would also be very concerned if it was assumed that by re-organising to 2-tier that all those who attend schools elsewhere would be “attracted back” purely by the allure of a shiny new building. Published exam statistics and Ofsted ratings of “good” or “outstanding” remains the overriding deal-breaker for the majority of people. For Berwick Academy the perceived problems with its GCSE results remain. It is unfortunate that public perceptions have, and not without justification, deteriorated over the years that they have become entrenched. Public opinion, especially locally, has been influenced by schools’ exam results, particularly Berwick Academy’s GCSEs. This will not change but presents a considerable challenge that must be overcome in order to win people over to whatever is proposed for Berwick schools.

In relation to the questions about whether Glendale Middle, Wooler First and Belford Primary Schools should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership the governors did not give an indication either way. In the absence of any real and useful information about what the post-reorganisation educational landscape might look like in north Northumberland the governors felt it was

impossible to make any validly informed judgements but did offer some important closely associated issues which they felt merited careful consideration:

- The views of the communities of those schools ought to matter the most.
- A move to Alnwick would mean Duchess High School 'absorbing' years 7 and 8 children from Glendale Middle. It would also mean year 6 children from Belford Primary flowing straight on through to year 7 at The Duchess High School. This presumably would displace, within a couple of years, many of the secondary age Berwick based children who currently travel to attend Alnwick schools instead of feeding through to Berwick Academy.
- If these schools moved to Alnwick there could be public perceptions that the move had been orchestrated to 'trap' children within schools in Berwick.
- The combined number of Berwick based children currently attending Scottish and Private schools exceeds those currently attending Alnwick schools. Rather than re-capturing Alnwick bound Berwick children, if the situation is not handled carefully, those children will seek out the Scottish or Private School alternatives instead; or look further afield resulting in a move away from Berwick altogether.

With regard to suggestions for how additional specialist provision could be delivered, the governing body commented that those with first-hand experience of the system as it currently operates will have invaluable insights to share, but that professional bodies and specialist agencies must also be consulted. Governors agreed that children should not have to travel far to access the support they need. This is wholly insupportable and, assumed, incredibly inefficiently expensive.

The Grove School is consistently outstanding and is to be thoroughly commended. However, it needs new expanded premises with plenty of outdoor space which would greatly enhance the educational experience of the children.

Governors did question the data within the consultation document in respect of ASD and SEMH children. From speaking to teachers/teaching assistants they state there are more children in September 2022 than is reported within the data. They also questioned irregularities with the forecasted year-on-year increases.

In respect of suggestions for how specialist provision could be delivered, governors attempted to coherently assimilate what they gleaned from various sources but found that it was a bewildering disparate picture, suggesting a system struggling to cope and for too many children not really working well. Three major points did stand out:

- The importance of retaining the 3-tier system.
- The obsession, often frustratingly, with inclusion that brings pressures to see 'mainstream integration' as the ultimate goal.
- Considered crucial that a complete and holistic overview of ASD provision (in the whole of the Berwick Partnership and not just in Berwick Partnership Schools) needs to be conducted.

Similarly, governors were perplexed by the data in the consultation document relating to SEMH numbers and wondered how the numbers had been forecast and if the analytical methodology had sufficiently factored in the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered the governors suggested:

- Creation of a designated centrally-based, appropriately qualified and skilled SEMH County Co-ordinator accountable for overseeing SEND SEMH provision throughout all schools under the local authority's remit. This would promote a consistently clear, coherent and co-ordinated approach.
- There needs to be one SEMH Local Area Schools Co-ordinator for each of the geographically associated group of schools.
- Then there needs to be co-ordinated collaborative co-operation between the region's SEMH Local Area Schools Co-ordinators, overseen by the SEMH County Co-ordinator. Staff from all school should meet regularly for INSET, training, support sessions and opportunities to share best practice.

Governors noted that in respect of Early Years Provision there is widely available good provision with no Ofsted-identified concerns. They did wonder if consolidating all early year's provision within existing first schools, especially if it were free-funded from the age of two makes the most valuable use of space available due to existing surplus places and greatly facilitates early identification, intervention and support for SEND.

In respect of Post-16 provision governors suggested that all potential provision for Post-16 alternatives to GCSE/A Levels should be scoped out thoroughly for our children, young people and later-in-life learners.

The Governing Body of Tweedmouth Middle School hoped that whatever is decided that there is as little disruption as possible for children and their families in relation to lead-up to any re-organisation, managing the transition and issues of recruitment and retention of staff.

Extracts from their response states:

*"It is the educational ethos inculcated in children – the life-long-lasting love of learning and keenness to succeed instilled in them – by good teachers, led by a good head, and filtering through to families, and the wider school community locally as a whole, which does most to drive up standards. MIDDLE SCHOOLS DO THIS BRILLIANTLY."*

*"We see no merit in an alternative, substantially re-organised 3-tier, first-middle-high system; not when appropriately minimal tweaking, of things as they are, aimed only where they are necessary, at certain parts of the system, would suitably suffice; coupled with maximal initiative, input and investment targeted at key areas involving the one part of the system where all that is needed most."*

### 38. Berwick Academy



Berwick Academy Trustees made a resolution in 2022 to pursue a 2-tier structural change to the education system in Berwick in the belief that this would ensure long-term financial stability, build trusted relationships with students and parents and improve educational outcomes.

Falling numbers of school aged children in Berwick and surrounding communities is having an impact on resources in the education sector. Financial benefits of Years 7 and 8 in Berwick Academy could be invested to support all students to thrive but especially those with SEND or barriers to learning.

Students move schools at a time of great physical and emotional change and as we do not have trusted relationship with parents, due to not knowing them, the mistaken belief develops that these changes happen because the child has moved to the Academy. Students come to us at a time of greatest hormonal changes and developmental insecurity, a time when building new trusted relationships is the most challenging. Building effective relationships in Years 7 and 8 is essential for supporting young people to flourish through the secondary and post-16 phase.

When students arrive at high school they are expected to make GCSE options choices within the first term, sometimes with only a few weeks of studying a new subject. Option choices would be based on experience of two previous years of study with specialist staff.

The Trustees noted that there are currently 326,733 schools in the UK and of these 21,445 are primary schools (including first) and 11,228 secondary schools (including middle and 16-18 provision). There are only 102 middle schools in the UK. Any comparative data needs to be viewed with extreme caution given the statistically small number of middle schools.

An extract from their response states:

*“The resolution to pursue a 2-tier structural change to the education system in Berwick is not about academisation, the £40m or individual schools. It is about improving educational outcomes for all students across all stages of education, ensuring long-term financial stability of education provision across Berwick and the surrounding community and building trusted relationships with students and parents ensuring the best support can be provided for children and young people.”*

### 39. The Grove Special School

The Governors at The Grove Special School felt unable to comment on the 2-tier/3-tier question. However, they wished to strongly state their commitment to the development of SEND in the partnership and as part of this the development of a larger Grove School, which would be able to meet the needs of the children in the partnership that they currently do not have space for.

An extract from their response states:

*“The Grove School can offer Outstanding support to pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties and will also support the development of any further SEND provision in the partnership. We however would intend to remain with our current criteria for places in our school.”*

40. School Staff working in Schools in Berwick Partnership

First School staff:

17 responses received

6 in favour of 3-tier system

8 in favour of 2-tier system

3 selected the didn't know

Middle School staff:

39 responses received

37 in favour of 3-tier system

2 in favour of 2-tier system

High School staff:

17 responses received

0 in favour of 3-tier system

17 in favour of 2-tier system

**Responses and Evidence Collated from Other Sources**

41. Response from the Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB)

The NDEB would seek to ensure the continuance of a Church of England presence in Berwick which gives parents the right to choose a Church of England school for their child(ren).

In initial pre-consultation, all six Church of England Schools directly affected indicated a preference for becoming primary. The Diocesan Director of Education attended workshops with headteachers/stakeholders, open consultation meetings in the partnership and listened to the views of parents/carers. It recognises that there has been robust debate about the correct model for Berwick and appreciates the challenges of the number of 'tiny' and 'rural' schools as well as pressures on all schools of falling roles and the detrimental impact of this on school budgets.

The NDEB would wish to avoid the continuation of a "mixed economy" of both first and primary schools in nearby geographical areas which was a result of the closure of Belford Middle School, a decision that was supported at the time to sustain a rural village's access to education.

Should the outcome of this consultation be to move to 2-tier this would mean schools on the border of the partnership would be in line with those of the neighbouring Alnwick partnership. This would be seen positively by NDEB to ensure consistency and choice for parents and children living in the area.

With regards to Glendale Middle and Wooler First School the NDEB would wish to support the views of the Governing Body of those schools. However, it does have a concern that losing a number of children from the partnership may jeopardise the viability of key stage 3 and 4 in Berwick.

Considering the geographical location of Belford the NDEB would suggest that Belford Primary should remain within the partnership.

The NDEB are aware and supportive of the offer from Berwick St Mary's C of E First School to support children with special educational needs and disabilities within the partnership and welcome this potential opportunity provided the correct investment is made to the building and surrounding grounds to support this.

With regarding EYFS provision, NDEB noted the capacity already available in the area, but would support any enhancements to this provision. In relation to post-16 provision the NDEB would support a partnership approach from all stakeholders to ensure the needs of all students are met.

An extract from their response states:

*"In light of these discussions the NDEB is of the opinion that a 2-tier system would be the most beneficial way forwards for the children of the partnership. The NDEB does not wish to suggest an 'alternative option'."*

#### 42. Response from the Diocese of Hexham of Newcastle

No response was received from the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.

#### 43. Summary of feedback from Town and Parish Councils in the Berwick Partnership area

Written responses to the consultation were received from two Parish Councils, Adderstone with Lucker and Belford. Both Parish Councils asked for Belford Primary School, and its education catchment area, to be moved into the Alnwick Partnership.

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

44. In total 6,376 consultees were sent a link to the Phase 1 pre-consultation document and questionnaire directly and 365 responses were received to the consultation. The questions posed in the consultation document were as follows:

- *Do you think schools in the Berwick Partnership will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard their viability for future generations if they are organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or if they are reorganised to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure?*
- *Do you have an alternative option for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership that would address the issues outlined in this document that you would like us to consider?*
- *Do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?*
- *Do you think Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?*

- *Do you have any suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible?*
- *Do you have any comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area?*
- *Do you have any suggestions on what Post-16 provision would be useful to assist young people in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development?*
- *Do you have any general or additional comments that you would like the Council's Cabinet to consider in relation to any of the issues raised in this consultation document?*

#### 45. Consultees who supported the 3-tier system and reasons

194 (53%) supported the view that schools in Berwick should remain organised within the current 3-tier system.

Of this group,

- 45 were parents of first school pupils
- 43 were parents of middle school pupils
- 7 were parents of high school pupils
- 6 were staff of first schools
- 37 were staff of middle schools
- 0 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 3-tier system were:

- 11-year-olds are too young to be with 16 and 18 year olds.
- Middle Schools offer a key transition period for students allowing them time to become more confident, develop more independence and prepares them for the next stage of their education.
- Middle Schools offer a nurturing environment to children where they feel secure and happy. Numbers in the Academy will become too high and children will get lost in the system.
- Why change a system that is working well, both academically and pastorally. Outcomes at First and Middle Schools are at or above both local and national figures. The problem lies with how the academy performs and delivers education.
- The 3-tier system and Middle Schools works well for Berwick. Pupils are usually ready to move at the end of Year 4 and Middle Schools offer access a broad curriculum with specialist teachers and a variety of extra-curricular activities.
- 2-tier doesn't provide better education or improve outcomes. In Alnwick The Duchess' High School's Ofsted judgement and GCSE performance have declined since its transition to 2-tier.

- The 3-tier system is a proven system that works well and is particularly suited to rural areas.

#### 46. Consultees who supported the 2-tier system and reasons

142 (39%) supported the view that schools in Berwick should reorganise to a 2-tier(primary/secondary) system.

Of this group,

- 45 were parents of first school pupils
- 12 were parents of middle school pupils
- 6 were parents of high school pupils
- 7 were staff of first schools
- 2 were staff of middle schools
- 17 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 2-tier system were:

- Middle school system is out of sync and outdated. Two-tier is the recognised system in operation across most areas of the country and matches with national curriculum stages.
- Would be one less transition which in effect would reduce disruption and stress for pupils.
- With two-tier there would be greater accountability for Key Stages. Schools would be responsible for specific stages of the curriculum which would enable improved outcomes, instead of splitting key stages within the current three-tier system.
- Would allow for better GCSE preparation. Pupils joining the high school in Year 7 would give them time to settle in and see what the subjects are before making important decisions. It would also enable teachers time to get to know the pupils and their abilities.
- CPD for middle school teachers is difficult to acquire so they either need to do primary or secondary CPD.
- A two-tier model is more sustainable and financially viable.

#### 47. Consultees who selected 'don't know' option in relation to which system would be better able to meet the challenges facing the Berwick Partnership

29 (8%) were not able to identify which system they believed would be better at achieving improved educational outcomes and viable and sustainable schools.

Of this group,

- 10 were parents of first school pupils
- 5 were parents of middle school pupils
- 0 were parents of high school pupils
- 3 were staff of first schools
- 0 were staff of middle schools
- 0 were staff of high schools

The main reasons given for selecting the 'don't know' option are:

- Under-decided or had mixed feelings as can see benefits of both systems.

- No information to indicate what a 2-tier or 3-tier system would look like (eg. would all first school convert to primary schools or would some close).
- Not convinced that moving to 2-tier would solve the problems and improve outcomes.
- Funding is the issue, not which tier system is in place.

48. Consultees who responded to the question 'Do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership'?

28 (8%) of consultees who responded to this question had a direct link with the Wooler and Glendale schools as a parent of a pupil on roll, governor or member of staff.

Of this group

- 8 favoured the schools remaining in the Berwick Partnership
- 16 favoured the schools moving into the Alnwick Partnership
- 4 selected the 'Don't know' option

49. Consultees who responded to the question 'Do you think Belford Primary should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership'?

28 (8%) of consultees who responded to this question had a direct link with the Belford Primary as a parent of a pupil on roll, governor or member of staff.

Of this group

- 2 favoured the schools remaining in the Berwick Partnership
- 26 favoured the schools moving into the Alnwick Partnership
- 0 selected the 'Don't know' option

50. Suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible

192 comments were submitted by consultees for increasing specialist provision with the Berwick Partnership area which were able to be themed as follows:

- Rebuild and expand The Grove School to increase capacity to cater for children with a wider range of issues. Any rebuild of the school should include outdoor and green space for the children.
- Additional alternative provision sites that offer small group intervention work on short-term placements with close links to mainstream schools to support graduated returns.
- Primary and Secondary Schools should have an outreach unit/primary support base where a child could be on partial timetables.
- Specialist provision for those children who don't meet special school criteria/thresholds.
- There is a gap between school provision and the specialist provision at the Grove. The Grove is very particular about its intake and perhaps needs to

widen its criteria for the children it will accept. Could the Grove expand its remit to cater for that intermediate level of specialist support?

- Provide additional training for staff.
- Funding increased to enable more specialist staff to be employed.
- Locally provision should be a priority, pupils should not have to travel out of their catchment area to receive their education, despite any additional needs they may have.

51. Comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area?

128 comments on current early years provision were submitted by consultees which were able to be themed as follows:

- Early Years provision in Berwick was viewed to be of a high standard and offered a wide range of options for parents.
- Some indications that there was insufficient provision, depending on which community you lived in but particularly around Wooler.
- Childcare for under twos and wrap-a-round care were specific areas where provision was lacking.
- As the birth rate is falling there are a number of surplus places which means that providers are in competition with each other.
- Encourage partnership working for early years provision, including private providers, to ensure consistency of curriculum, common goals and values.

52. Suggestions on Post-16 provision in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development

102 comments were submitted by consultees in relation to the Post-16 provision within the Berwick Partnership area which were able to be themed as follows:

- Further investment in post-16 education is needed within Berwick.
- More advice, including careers guidance, would be beneficial.
- More choice in relation to subjects and courses on offer.
- Transport, including free transport, to nearest provider.
- Different pathways need to be considered including vocational, technical and practical skills. There needs to be a focus on local employment opportunities.
- Attract college provision into the area.
- Work in partnership with Northumberland College and Universities.
- Specialised Post-16 SEND unit and specialized sixth form.
- Merged sixth forms.

53. Alternative Proposals to the 3-tier and 2-tier structures

Consultees put forward 115 comments in respect of alternative proposals to the 3-tier and 2-tier (primary/secondary) systems. These alternative proposals were able to be themed as follows:

- Rural catchment areas catered for. There could be three first stage schools prior to the Academy (two in urban areas and one in a rural area). This would cater for the rural catchment and provide choice to parents.
- Two smaller schools could work together to be infant (to KS1)/primary to reduce the number of good rural first schools that may have to close.
- Keep first schools and have school for 9-18 where the 9-11 are kept separate and the 16-18 are also kept separate. The management and teaching staff can cover all three age groups as appropriate. Therefore, spending less money on staff and infrastructure and more on the children's education and facilities.
- 2-tier system but with Post 16 operating separately from the schools (High School operated to Year 11 and then there was a community college for year 12 and beyond). This would allow for better quality post-16 provision which could then provide for young people and adults from the North of Northumberland and the Borders.
- Scremerston could be the "rural hub" for the Berwick partnership bringing together all rural communities. Using the expertise of the middle schools to support in the development of key stage 3 onwards.
- Years 7 and 8 on one site and Years 9-13 in another. This model could be adopted in the Berwick Partnership Schools, using Tweedmouth Middle School for years 7-8, and building a new school to replace Berwick Academy for years 9-13. That way the children would not only remain in Primary school for two more years, but they would also maintain the advantages (that they currently enjoy in the Middle School) of a smaller, safer and more nurturing environment in the lower years, before moving to the larger site for older pupils; all within a 2-tier system.
- Merge the two Berwick Middle Schools onto one site and an acknowledgement that Middle Schools deemed secondary relinquish their autonomy, in-order to be directed, supported and led by an overall secondary HT and School Leadership Team capable of ensuring that curriculum and culture within the school is overarchingly focussed on delivering massively improved attainments at the end of KS4 and KS5 for all pupils.

### Commentary on Alternative Models

The alternative models above relating to the establishment of an age 9-18 school, the merger of the 2 middle schools and a separate Post-16 provision from Berwick Academy were not supported during pre-consultation discussions with schools in the partnership.

Some of the aspects of the proposals relating to first school provision may be able to be explored during Phase 2 consultation in light of the proposed models at paras. 55 and 56. Consultees would again be requested to submit alternative proposals or additions to the proposals during the next phase of consultation, if approved.

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

54. It is constantly reiterated during consultation on school structures that they are not referendums. However, while feedback from Phase 1 consultation has been interesting, it has not been conclusive in relation to a favoured model of organisation for the Berwick Partnership.



Of the 15 Governing Bodies responsible for schools in the Berwick Partnership, 9 have responded that they are in favour of a 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure of education. 7 of this group are first schools, 1 is the Governing Body of Wooler and Glendale, and the final governing body are the Trustees of Berwick Academy. 4 schools are strongly in favour of retaining the 3-tier structure, made of 2 of the town's first schools and the 2 town middle schools. 2 schools have indicated they do not have a preference for either structure, although 1 of these is The Grove which would not be impacted by reorganisation of the other schools. Therefore, it would seem that the majority of the educational professionals in the partnership favour the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. It should also be noted that the Church of England Newcastle Diocesan Education Board (NDEB) has indicated that it would favour a 2-tier system over a mixed-system of education in the Berwick area; 6 of the 17 schools in the partnership are CE faith schools.

However, responses from parents, staff and the wider community appear to be split almost equally in relation to the 3-tier or 2-tier debate. Firstly, the number of responses received to Phase 1 consultation was less than the number of responses to the community survey in Autumn 2021, being 365 and 436 respectively – it would be unwise to speculate as to whether this is due to apathy from stakeholders or a lack of detail on proposals for the individual schools with which they associate themselves. Secondly, there is a no majority preference from respondees for either the 3-tier or 2-tier system; first school parents and staff are split in relation to preference, high school staff are wholly in favour of 2-tier, while middle school staff and parents are mostly in favour of 3-tier.

However, given the feedback submitted by respondees to this Phase 1 consultation in relation to the benefits and negatives of both systems, it is proposed that it would not be appropriate to take forward only one model of organisation of schools into Phase 2. Therefore, Cabinet is recommended to approve Phase 2 consultation on both a revised 3-tier model and a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of organisation, which are set out at paras. 56 and 57 and which reflect the changes required to schools in the light of the issues set out in the Background to this report.

## **Proposed models of organisation and provision for the Berwick Partnership**

### **55. Current 3-tier Structure of schools in Berwick Partnership**

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll Jan 2022</b>	<b>Capacity (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)</b>	<b>Forms of Entry in each year group (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)</b>	<b>Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)</b>
Belford Primary	79	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	63	114	1	30
Holy Trinity CE First	149	150	1	30
Holy Island CE First	2	25	0.2	5

Hugh Joicey CE First	59	73	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	21	50	0.3	10
Norham CE First	25	50	0.3	10
Scremerston First	55	90	0.6	18
Spittal First	130	171	1.3	40
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	124	150	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	118	150	1	30
Wooler First	103	150	1	30
St Cuthbert's	71	75	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	338	456	3.8	114
Glendale Middle	117	169	1.4	42
Tweedmouth Middle	346	440	3.1	93
Berwick Academy	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	916	7.5	225

56. Proposed model for a revised 3-tier system of schools in Berwick

<b>School</b>	<b>Number on roll Jan 2022</b>	<b>Proposed Capacity</b> (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)	<b>Proposed Forms of Entry in each year group</b> (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)	<b>Proposed Planned Admission Number</b> (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)
Belford Primary	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
	79	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	Reduces PAN and opens on-site specialist SEN provision			
	63	75	0.5	15
Holy Trinity CE First	149	150	1	30
Holy Island CE First	2	25	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	59	73	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	21	50	0.3	10
Norham CE First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth PP/West and Hugh Joicey			
Scremerston First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth PP/West and Spittal			
Spittal First	Reduces PAN			
	130	171	1	30
Tweedmouth Prior Park First	Schools amalgamate on Tweedmouth Prior Park site and retain Tweedmouth West's DfE number and URN			

And Tweedmouth West First	Tw PP – 124 Tw W - 118	300	2	60
Wooler First	Converts to become a primary, moves into Alnwick Partnership			
	103	210	1	30
St Cuthbert's	71	75	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	338	456	3.8	114
Glendale Middle	Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	346	440	3.1	93
Berwick Academy*	Reduces PAN			
	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	740	6	180

\*Note the Trustees of Berwick Academy would need to agree to reduce the PAN

57. Proposed model for a 2-tier (primary/secondary) system of schools

School	Number on roll Jan 2022	Proposed Capacity (net no. Pupils able to be educated in the building)	Proposed Forms of Entry in each year group (1FE = average class of 30 pupils)	Proposed Planned Admission Number (PAN – the number of children admitted to the school at usual transition point in September)
Belford Primary	Moves into Alnwick Partnership and catchment area reduced			
	79	187	1	30
Berwick St Mary's CE First	Becomes primary, reduces PAN and opens on-site primary specialist SEN provision			
	63	105	0.5	15
Holy Trinity CE First	Becomes primary			
	149	210	1	30
Holy Island CE First	Becomes primary			
	2	35	0.2	5
Hugh Joicey CE First	Becomes primary			
	59	105	0.5	15
Lowick CE First	Becomes primary			
	21	70	0.3	10
Norham CE First	25	70	0.3	10
Scremerston First	Closes and catchment split between Tweedmouth Prior Park and Spittal			
Spittal First	Becomes Primary and reduces PAN to 30			
	130	210	1	30
	Becomes primary			

Tweedmouth Prior Park First	124	210	1	30
Tweedmouth West First	Becomes primary			
	118	210	1	30
Wooler First	Converts to become a primary and remains in Berwick Partnership			
	103	210	1	30
St Cuthbert's*	Becomes Primary			
	71	105	0.5	15
Berwick Middle	Closes			
Glendale Middle	Closes			
Tweedmouth Middle	Closes			
Berwick Academy*	523 (inc 6 <sup>th</sup> Form)	1100	6	180

\*Note the Trustees of Academies would need to agree to change the age range of their academies before seeking approval from the Regional School's Commissioner.

58. The proposals for Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools set out at paras. 56 and 57 would potentially have an impact on schools in the Alnwick Partnership as result of Alnwick's greater catchment area being expanded should either of the models proposed be approved. Therefore, Phase 2 consultation would include this implication of the models, and all schools and parents of pupils on roll in schools in the Alnwick Partnership would also be consulted.

However, should either of the proposed models be approved, it would not be necessary to expand the capacity of the building of The Duchess's High School in Alnwick to incorporate students living in the current Belford and Wooler/Glendale catchment areas and therefore no capital costs would be necessary. Pupil numbers have also been falling in the Alnwick Partnership in recent years and The Duchess's High School already has significant numbers of Berwick Partnership and Coquet Partnership pupils on its roll. Therefore, the school's buildings would be able to accommodate students living in the Belford and Wooler areas should either of the models at paras. 56 and 57 be approved for implementation.

59. Proposed models for additional SEND Provision in the Berwick Partnership area

#### *Overview and context*

In Northumberland, the number of children and young people who have been diagnosed as having Autism (ASD) or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) as a primary need has been increasing, with significant additional capacity in the county's 9 special schools being required year on year for the past 10 years. Overall, this steady upward trend in demand for special school places equates to an average increase over this period to date of 7% each year (actual variation from year to year has been between 2% and 12%). There continues to be an increasing demand from parents for their children to be educated within special school provision both in and out of the county. It is also widely acknowledged nationally that there are significant

financial pressures on mainstream schools in supporting SEND provision, not least due to school budget pressures and expectations on schools to fund the first £6k of support for each SEND learner with an EHCP.

As at January 2022, there were 58 students residing in the Berwick Partnership area who were on roll in special schools in Northumberland or an out of county specialist provision. Of these, 36 were on roll at The Grove Special School. This means 22 students were attending special schools outside of the Berwick area, mainly in the South East of the county, and of these students half had either ASD, SEMH or and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) as a primary need – note that SLCN often leads to a later diagnosis of ASD.

Tables 3 shows the projected number of students expected to have an EHCP primary need in ASD living in the Berwick area, with data based on current Berwick-resident students with an EHCP in schools and special schools.

*Table 3 – Projected number of students living in Berwick area with ASD as a primary need*

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	NOR Totals
2022	1	1	4	1	6	6	8	4	16	5	9	3	6	2	72
2023	3	2	1	6	2	7	8	7	8	15	7	8	2	6	82
2024	3	4	2	2	7	2	9	7	15	8	22	6	6	2	95
2025	3	4	4	2	2	8	2	8	15	15	11	20	5	6	105
2026	2	4	4	5	3	2	10	2	18	15	22	10	15	5	117

Table 4 shows the projected number of students expected to have an EHCP primary need in SEMH living in the Berwick area, with data based on current Berwick-resident students with an EHCP in schools and special schools.

*Table 4 - Projected number of students living in Berwick area with ASD as a primary need*

Final Forecasts Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	NOR Totals
2022	0	3	2	9	16	18	8	13	8	9	13	7	4	2	112
2023	0	0	5	3	11	20	15	10	12	9	9	10	3	3	110
2024	0	0	0	8	4	14	16	17	9	13	9	6	4	2	102
2025	0	0	0	1	9	4	11	19	16	10	13	7	3	3	96
2026	1	0	0	0	1	11	4	13	18	17	10	10	3	2	90

As for all forecasts and predictions, the numbers set out in Tables 3 and 4 are subject to a number of variables, not least that these are the first SEN predictions for the Berwick Area (forecasting SEN for the county as a whole is a new process). For example, the impact of larger or smaller year groups year to year or student movement in and out of the school system at certain points can have a noticeable impact on predictions. Furthermore, while not all of the projected students with a primary need in SEMH and ASD in Tables 3 and 4 will necessarily need to attend a special school, nonetheless it is clear that the overall trend is for increasing numbers of students with these primary needs. Therefore, additional specialist provision for these students is required in the Berwick Partnership area in order to reduce the need for so many of this vulnerable group of students to travel a considerable distance to school and to be educated closer to their home communities.

#### *Proposals for additional specialist provision*

During Phase 1 consultation, consultees were asked for their views on how additional specialist provision could be provided in the Berwick area and their responses are

summarised at para. 51. In addition, an informal meeting was held with all of the headteachers in the Berwick Partnership, including The Grove Special School to consider the data set out in Tables 3 and 4 and to discuss how and where additional specialist provision could be provided in the Berwick area. Officers also met informally with representatives from the North Northumberland Branch of the National Autistic Society who are also members of the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum and were joined by the headteachers/representatives of The Grove Special School, St Mary's CE First and Berwick Middle School on 13 September.

Taking into account the responses from consultation and the outcome of the informal meetings with headteachers and parent/carer representatives in the light of the potential for either a 3-tier or 2-tier structure of education in the Berwick Partnership, Cabinet is asked to approve consultation on the following models for growing specialist provision in the Berwick area as follows.

### **Proposed additional Specialist provision model under revised 3-tier structure**

- The Grove Special School continues with its existing provision on its current site with specialism particularly in Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound Learning Difficulties (PMLD);
- First School phase - Specialist provision for primary-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at St Mary's CE First School with between 10 and 12 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education where appropriate;
- Middle School phase - Specialist provision for middle school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Middle School with between 10 and 15 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education where appropriate;
- High School phase - Specialist provision for high school-age students with ASD or SEMH primary needs to be established at Berwick Academy with 15 to 20 planned places. This provision would be separate to the school's mainstream provision but with opportunities for students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate ;
- Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.

### **Proposed additional Specialist provision model under 2-tier (primary/secondary) reorganisation**

- The Grove Special School relocates to the site of Tweedmouth Middle School and increases its planned student numbers to 70 across all year groups and amends its SEND designation to include SEMH. Shared site with Berwick Academy would enable opportunities for students to access mainstream education and study for qualifications where appropriate;

- Primary phase – it is envisaged that St Mary’s CE First School would continue to operate as a Primary Support Base (nurturing unit) for pupils in line with the Council’s Inclusion Strategy.
- Options to be identified for ways in which all schools across the Berwick Partnership, particularly small, rural schools, could pool funding in order to support specialist SEND provision on site through a peripatetic approach, with the aim of enabling those students for whom it is appropriate within their mainstream school.

If approved by Cabinet, the above proposals for additional SEND provision would be included in the Phase 2 consultation in conjunction with the proposals for school organisation set out at paras. 56 and 57.

#### 60. Implications for staff

Both models of reorganisation set out at paras. 56 and 57 would have implications for staff in all schools. Staff in schools proposed for closure under either model would be at risk of redundancy if the proposals were approved at a later stage, while other schools would need to revise staffing structures where a reduction in Planned Admission Number and/or the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure was approved.

It would be expected that under the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, first schools becoming primaries and the extension of the age range of Berwick Academy would result in those schools requiring additional staff - this would assist with redundancies being kept to a minimum.

In any event, the federated Governing Body would adhere to the relevant requirements regarding consultation on staffing structures, including consultation with relevant staff representatives (Trades Unions) along prescribed timelines. Furthermore, should Cabinet approve Phase 2 consultation on a reorganised 3-tier structure or a reorganisation to a 2-tier structure, Council Officers would work to broker a draft Staffing Protocol agreement during the consultation period to include all schools that would ensure a fair and equitable appointment process under any new structure, should either model be approved for implementation at a later stage.

#### 61. Catchment areas and Transport Priority Areas

The Council sets catchment areas for community and voluntary controlled schools, while voluntary aided, trust and foundation schools and academies are responsible for setting their own catchment areas, should their Governing Bodies or Trustees choose to have one. For example, historically RC schools within Northumberland do not have catchment areas, and therefore qualification for transport to those schools is usually made either on the basis of faith preference or nearest school.

The Council is responsible for Home to School Transport and has set transport priority areas across the whole of Northumberland. In relation to community and voluntary controlled schools, these transport priority areas mirror those schools’ catchment areas. Currently in the Berwick Partnership, the catchment areas of all types of schools and academies also mirror the Council’s transport priority areas.

In relation to the proposed changes to the 3-tier system or reorganisation to the 2-tier system in the Berwick Partnership set out at paras. 56 and 57, there would be

changes to the Belford Primary catchment area if it was approved that the school should move into the Alnwick Partnership. Therefore, the transport priority area set by the Council would mirror any changes to its catchment and eligible students of statutory school age living in the new catchment area would be likely to qualify for transport to Belford Primary up to the end of Year 6 and would then be likely to qualify for transport to The Duchess's High School in Alnwick from Year 7 onwards.

In relation to the proposed change to the 3-tier system at para. 56 where it is proposed that Glendale should close and Wooler First should become a primary and join the Alnwick Partnership, eligible students of statutory school age living in the Wooler First School catchment would be likely to qualify for transport to Wooler Primary (as it would become) up to the end of Year 6 and would then be likely to qualify for transport to The Duchess's High School in Alnwick from Year 7 onwards. However, students living in the Wooler Primary catchment area could also be eligible for transport to Berwick Middle School in Years 5 and 6 or to Berwick Academy for Year 9 onwards if these were selected by parental preference and were also the nearest schools, as measured in line with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to approval of reorganisation to the 2-tier system, eligible students of statutory school age living in the Wooler First School catchment would be likely to qualify for transport to Wooler Primary (as it would become) up to the end of Year 6 and would continue to qualify for transport to Berwick Academy from Year 7 onwards. Under this proposal, if by parental preference an eligible student was to attend The Duchess's High School, they would only qualify for transport to the school if it was the nearest school, as measured in line with the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

In relation to the impact on changes to catchment areas of other schools within the proposals for changes to the 3-tier structure and reorganisation to a 2-tier structure, those catchment areas of schools that were extended as a result of the closure of another school would then also become the transport priority areas for eligible students living within those new catchment areas.

#### 62. Special Educational Needs Provision in mainstream schools

Outwith the proposal for additional SEND provision in the Berwick Partnership area set out at para. 59, there would be no change to the current provision of SEND in mainstream schools.

#### 63. Post-16 Provision

It is proposed to include Post-16 provision in Phase 2 consultation in the light of the proposed models for mainstream education set out at paras. 56 and 57.

#### 64. Early Years Provision

Feedback received from consultation and from Early Years Officers in the Council indicates that there is sufficient quantity of Early Years provision in the Berwick area, but that there may be some viability issues among some providers. This may be addressed through the implementation of either the revised 3-tier structure or a



reorganisation to 2-tier (primary/secondary) and the impact of these two models on Early years provision would be explored during Phase 2 consultation.

#### 65. Rural Schools and the presumption against closure

A number of schools in the Berwick Partnership are deemed to be rural under the DfE's Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order. These schools are:

- Belford Primary
- Holy Island CE First School
- Hugh Joicey CE First School
- Lowick CE First School
- Norham St Coelwulf's CE First School
- Scremerston First School

Glendale Middle School is classified as being located in a rural town on the DfE's Get Information About Schools website.

DfE guidance recommends that decision-makers should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that rural schools will never close, but that the rationale for closure should be strong and in the best interests of educational provision in the area. Following Phase 2 consultation if approved, should Cabinet be recommended to approve statutory consultation on the closure of any of the above rural schools, then Cabinet would need to consider the following factors before approving such statutory consultation:

- The likely effect on the local community;
- The proportion of pupils attending from within the local community;
- Educational standards and the effect on standards in neighbouring schools;
- The availability and cost to the local authority of transport to other schools;
- Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and no predicted demand for the school medium or long-term);
- Likely increase in motor vehicle usage and effects
- Alternatives to closure.

#### 66. Buildings Implications

As stated earlier in the report, the Council has already allocated £39,896,203 towards investment in school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. A budget for carrying out capital works under both Model A and Model B would be developed during the informal consultation, should it be approved. The costs of any linked proposals for provision for SEND students that may be set out as part of the recommendations arising would also be developed. These costs would then be presented to Cabinet for consideration along with the outcomes of the informal consultation in order to assist with decision making in relation to the proposed recommendations. In order to provide technical support in developing costs, Cabinet is also asked to approve the expenditure of up to £250k already identified for this purpose in the current year's medium term financial plan.

## 67. Sport and Recreation

There would be no negative impact on the current sport and recreation facilities at the first schools proposed to remain open under either the 3-tier or 2-tier models. Should Cabinet approve the closure of any schools under either of the proposals set out at paras. 56 and 57, the Council would need to have regard to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and Section 77 of the School Standard and Framework Act 1998 in relation to any potential loss of playing fields. It is proposed that the possible future use of school buildings and/or the playing fields of schools proposed to close (where not proposed to continue to be used to provide statutory education) should form part of the Phase 2 consultation process with stakeholders and the local community.

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

## **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 £ £39.896 has been allocated by the Council in the Medium-Term Plan. Part of the rationale for pre-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>	Should statutory consultation be approved at some later date, an outline business case (OBC) would be developed and submitted to cabinet with the outcomes of the statutory consultation which would also set out the procurement options and recommendations to deliver best value for the Council's investment.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There would be implications for staff in schools in the Berwick Partnership in relation to changes proposed within the 3-tier system or in relation to implementation of a 2-tier system (primary/secondary) should either be approved for implementation by Cabinet at a later date.
<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"/>	An EIA would be completed concurrently with the Phase 2 pre-consultation, should it be approved, and submitted with the report on outcomes to Cabinet.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Should statutory consultation be approved at a later date, a full project risk assessment would be presented as part of the OBC, following such 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>	It is envisaged that a sustainable and resilient school system in the Berwick area will have a positive impact on pupils, their families and the wider community.

<b>Wards:</b>	Berwick East, Berwick North, Berwick West with Ord, Norham and Islandshires
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## Background Papers

Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, 12 April 2022  
– Berwick Partnership Organisation

## Report Sign Off

	<b>Full name</b>
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Jan Willis
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	Guy Renner-Thompson

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Berwick Partnership, Your Views on Organisation (consultation document)  
Appendix 2 - Consultation Register

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Report Author: Sue Aviston, Head of School Organisation and Resources

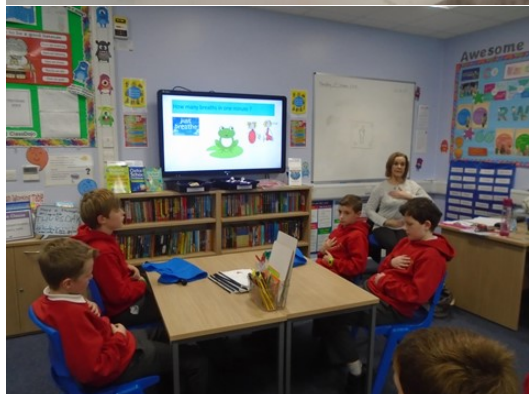
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Northumberland  
County Council

# BERWICK PARTNERSHIP YOUR VIEWS ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION



**23 MAY – 12 AUGUST 2022**

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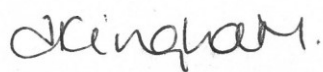
# INTRODUCTION

Northumberland County Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. However, before carrying out the works to school buildings, 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 now and for the future generations to come.

Schools in the Berwick Partnership are facing some specific issues. In early 2021, Council officers began talking to Headteachers and school Chairs of Governors about how schools could be organised in order to overcome these issues and a number of 'models' of organisation were reviewed and assessed - a summary of these discussions and their outcomes is set out in this document. The key conclusion of these discussions was that before any detailed proposals for individual schools linked to the buildings funding could be brought forward, the views of parents, staff, governors, pupils, the wider public and anyone with an interest in education in the Berwick Partnership area needed to be gathered on the general principle of whether schools should be organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. Once this principle is established, more detailed proposals for individual schools can be brought forward.

This consultation document sets out those key issues faced by schools in the partnership, an overview of the current structure and the 2-tier structure at a Northumberland and national level, and data and information about pupil numbers and performance of schools. As a result, I'm afraid this is a long document. However, we believe it's really important that you are provided with the information that you need to be able to form your views before you respond to this consultation. You should also bear in mind that this consultation is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale, not on the number of responses for one structure or another. So, as well as asking for your thoughts about the 3-tier and 2-tier school structures, we are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could address the issues raised in this document that would secure a viable school system in the Berwick Partnership for the children and young people living in this area.

We are also running two public events in the coming Summer Term (details later in this document) where you will be able to ask further questions from schools and Council officers – hopefully you will be able to attend one of them. I really hope that you will take the time and opportunity to submit your views and I look forward to hopefully meeting you in July.



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

# CURRENT STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



The Berwick Partnership is currently organised mainly within the 3-tier (first/middle/high) school structure. There are 11 first schools, 1 first academy, 1 primary school, 3 middle schools, 1 age 13-18 academy and 1 special school:

The 18 schools within the partnership are:

- **Belford Primary School – age 2-11**
- **Berwick St Mary's CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Berwick Holy Trinity CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Holy Island CE First School - age 4-9**
- **Hugh Joicey CE First School – age 4-9**
- **Lowick CE First School – age 2-9**
- **Norham St Coelwulf's CE First School – age 3-9**
- **Scremerston First School – age 4-9**
- **Spittal First School – age 4-9**
- **St Cuthbert's Catholic First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth Prior Park First School – age 3-9**
- **Tweedmouth West First School – age 4-9**
- **Wooler First School – age 2-9**
- **Berwick Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Glendale Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Tweedmouth Community Middle School – age 9-13**
- **Berwick Academy –age 13-18**
- **The Grove Special School – age 2-19**



Some first schools also have provision for children from age 2 or 3 which are run separately from the school, but based on the school site e.g. Tweedmouth Prior Park First and Spittal First School.

In the 3-tier structure educational pathway, pupils in first schools leave at the end of Year 4 and transfer into Year 5 at middle school, where they remain until the end of Year 8. From middle school, pupils then transfer into Year 9 until the end of Year 11 or the end of Year 13 depending on their choices.

In 2017 the Governing Bodies of St Mary's CE Middle School in Belford and Belford First School requested consultation on the closure of the middle school and the reorganisation of the first school to a primary school. This proposal was approved and the first school became Belford Primary School in September 2018.

# ISSUES FACING THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



## OFSTED GRADES

Twelve of the 13 first and primary schools are graded Outstanding or Good, while Tweedmouth Prior Park First School is graded 'Requires Improvement', although it continues to be taking effective action. All 3 middle schools are currently graded 'Good' by Ofsted. Berwick Academy was inspected by Ofsted in November 2021 and was graded as 'Requires Improvement', having previously been judged to be Inadequate. The Grove Special School is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

## EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Academic achievement is only one way of measuring the quality of a pupil's educational experience. Parents and carers of pupils on roll in schools in the Berwick Partnership will know the many other ways in which their children are benefitting from their school. However, educational outcomes are important and therefore the following data is presented for information.

### Key Stage 1:

Children in first schools and primary schools are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) assessments, which are taken by children at the end of Year 2 when they are aged 7 or almost 7. These assessments are not published as their purpose is mainly to assist schools with developing the next learning steps for individual children, although they are shared with parents.

### **Key Stage 2:**

Children in primary schools and middle schools are assessed at the end of Year 6 when they are aged 11 or almost 11. Key Stage 2 (KS2) assessments did not take place in 2020 and 2021, therefore the last available data for Berwick Partnership is from 2019. Children are assessed against a number of measures, but one of the key measures is the percentage of children who meet the expected standard for Reading, Writing and Maths. The results for 2019 for children in Year 6 in schools in the Berwick Partnership are set out in Table 1, together with the Northumberland and England averages that year.

**Table 1 - Percentage of students achieving KS2 expected standard in Berwick Partnership 2019**

	<b>% Children who met expected standard</b>
<b>Belford Primary School</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Berwick Middle School</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Glendale Middle School</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Tweedmouth Middle School</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Northumberland average</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>England average</b>	<b>65%</b>

From Table 1, you can see that the highest percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths was at Belford Primary School, with the two Berwick town middles also achieving above average scores, while Glendale Middle achieved just below the county and national average.

### **Key Stage 4 – GCSE Results**

The last verified outcomes at GCSE (Key Stage 4) for Berwick Academy were in summer 2019, as set out in Table 2. The DfE has stated that due to the way in which GCSE results were assessed and awarded in the summer terms of 2020 and 2021, they cannot be meaningfully compared to previous years' results as a way of measuring pupil performance. However, the key measures of pupil performance at GCSE in 2019, 2020 and 2021 for Berwick Academy are included in Table 2 for information purposes. For the reasons explained it is not possible to produce a Northumberland or England average.

**Table 2 – GCSE results, Berwick Academy**

		GCSE 2019	GCSE 2020	GCSE 2021
<b>Progress 8</b> (measures how much value a school has added to pupil progress compared to other schools. 0 = Expected Progress)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	-0.55	-0.26	Not available, but expected to make progress on 2020 results
	Northumberland average	-0.12	N/A	N/A
	England average	-0.03	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 4 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to low C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	47%	62%	63%
	Northumberland Average	65%	N/A	N/A
	England Average	65%	N/A	N/A
<b>% Students Achieving Grade 5 or more in English and Maths (equivalent to high C pass in previous grading system)</b>	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	21%	35%	36%
	Northumberland average	43%	N/A	N/A
	England average	43%	N/A	N/A
<b>Attainment 8</b> (measures how well pupils perform against 8 qualifications - higher figure is best)	<b>Berwick Academy</b>	38.9	43.8	41.8
	Northumberland average	46.5	N/A	N/A
	England average	46.7	N/A	N/A

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

### **Key Stage 5 - 'A' Levels Results**

As for GCSE results, 'A' level grades achieved by students in 2020 and 2021 cannot be directly compared to the last verified results in 2019, again as a result of the alternative grade awarding methods but results for Berwick Academy in the last 3 years are included in Table 3 for information.

**Table 3 – ‘A’ level results, Berwick Academy**

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Average result - Berwick Academy</b>	<b>D+, 22.5 points</b>	<b>C-, 27 points</b>	<b>B-, 35 points</b>
<b>Average result - Northumberland</b>	C+, 32.5 points	N/A	N/A
<b>Average result - England</b>	C+, 34.01	N/A	N/A
<b>Progress Score (0 = expected standard)</b>	-0.18 (Average for England)	N/A	N/A

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

### **Pupil Data and Information**

It is a fact that for a number of years, fewer children have been born in the Berwick Partnership area every year. Table 4 shows the average number of children per year group within each school phase (first/middle/high) living in the Berwick Partnership area at the moment (note this is not the average number of pupils actually on roll in Berwick schools). This demonstrates how pupil numbers have been falling over time and you can see that the average size year group is becoming smaller and smaller.

**Table 4 - Average number of children per year group within each school phase (first/middle/high) living in the Berwick Partnership**

<b>Current Phase</b>	<b>Average year group size within each school phase</b>
High School (Year 9 to 11)	221
Middle School (Year 5 to 8)	222
First School (Reception to Year 4)	200
Reception 2022 to Reception 2025	165

The result of these falling numbers is that schools will have many more unfilled (surplus) school places. Table 5 shows the steadily reducing number of children being born and registered with a GP in the Berwick Partnership over the last 9 years – there is a difference of 60 children between the size of the current Year 4 pupils born in Berwick and the group of children who will join a Reception class in September 2025 - this equates to 2 classes of 30 children.

**Table 5 – Number of children registered with GPs in Berwick Partnership in the last 9 years**

Reception Sept 2025	Reception Sept 2024	Reception Sept 2023	Reception Sept 2022	Current Reception	Current Year 1	Current Year 2	Current Year 3	Current Year 4
150	168	170	172	188	217	190	197	210

While there are around 500 houses planned to be built in the Berwick Partnership between 2021 and 2026, these would generate around an additional 148 children, which when spread across Reception to Year 11 equates to 12 children per year group. In short, these additional children will have little impact on the continuing fall in pupil numbers in the partnership in the coming years.

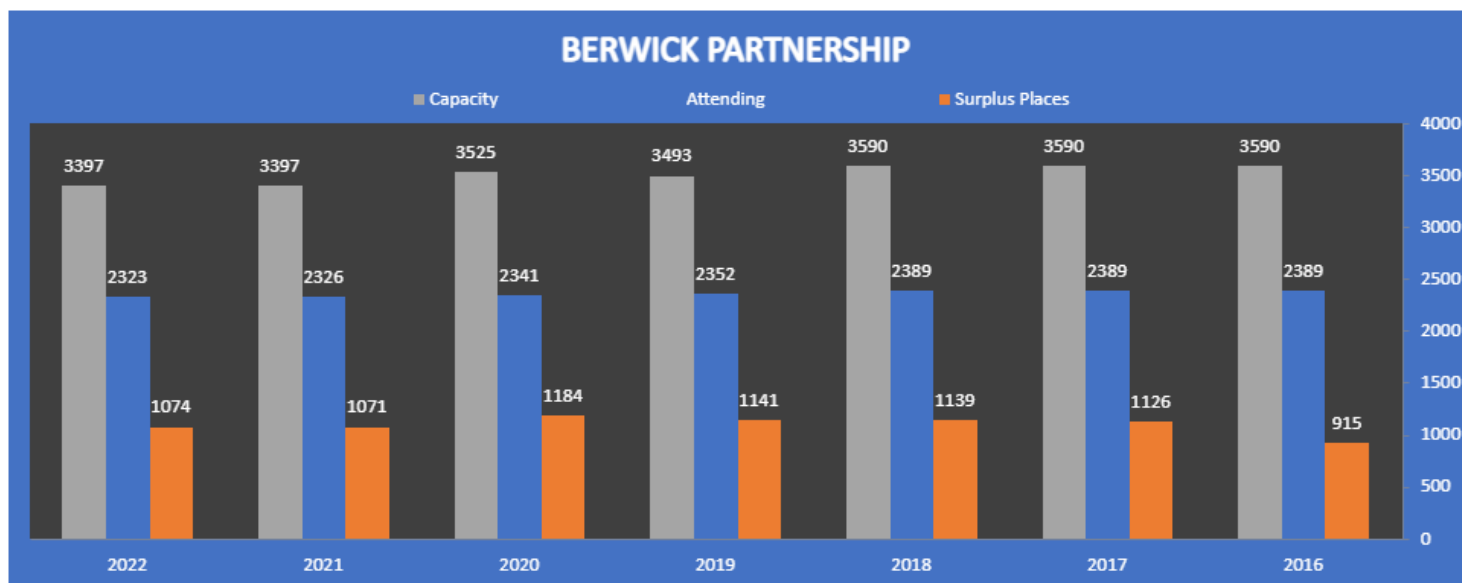
Added to the issue of falling pupil numbers is the number of pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership area, but who attend schools outside of the area. Table 6, Row 1 shows the number of pupils living in the Berwick Partnership of statutory school age (Column 1 - Reception to Year 11 **but not including children attending specialist provision**) against the number of children who actually attend a school in the partnership (Column 2). Rows 2, 3 and 4 break this data down by school phase.

**Table 6 – Number of pupils living in Berwick Partnership area (excluding pupils attending special schools) and number who attend Berwick Partnership schools**

	Column 1	Column 2 – Autumn 2021 data
Row 1	Total no. All Pupils living in Berwick Partnership catchment areas (Reception to Year 11)	Actual No. All Pupils living in Berwick area who attend Berwick Partnership schools (Reception to Year 11)
	2537	2094 (82% of Total)
Row 2	Total no. pupils who live in catchment areas of all first schools and Belford Primary	Actual No. pupils who live in catchment areas of all first schools and Belford Primary who also attend those schools
	1022	900 (88% Total)
Row 3	Total no. pupils who live in catchment areas of all middle schools (Year 5 to Year 8)	Actual No. Pupils who live in catchment areas of all middle schools and who also attend those schools (Year 5 to Year 8)
	884	774 (88% of Total)
Row 4	Total no. pupils who live in greater Berwick Catchment area (Year 9 to Year 11)	Actual No. pupils who live Berwick area and who also attend Berwick Academy (Year 9-Year 11)
	631	420 (67% Total)

As can be seen from Table 6, the first and middle schools appear to attract the majority of the children living in the catchment area of Berwick Partnership but this decreases at the high school phase. With falling pupil numbers, its therefore important for the viability of the whole partnership that it retains as many local pupils as possible throughout their educational pathway. The impact of children leaving the partnership is that it increases surplus places in schools even further – Table 7 below shows how surplus places (orange bars) have increased between January 2016 and January 2022.

**Table 7 – Surplus Places in Berwick Partnership as at January 2022**



Surplus places in themselves are not necessarily always a bad thing – some schools can still have a healthy budget and carry a certain number of surplus places if they attract the right number of students that still allows them to provide the broad and balanced curriculum that the Department for Education requires. However, when schools need to cut back on their teaching and learning resources as a result of a reducing budget then the educational experience of pupils may be impacted. Extensive surplus places across many schools also means that schools often compete for pupils.

**Which schools do the pupils who don’t attend Berwick Partnership schools go to?**

Table 8 shows that the majority of pupils resident in the Berwick Partnership area who attend out of catchment schools go into the Alnwick Partnership, Scotland and the private sector (pupils attending special schools or elective home education are not included in Table 8).

**Table 8 – Number of Berwick Partnership resident pupils attending out of catchment/private schools**

Phase	*Attending Alnwick Schools	*Attending Scottish Schools	*Attending Private Schools	Total	As percentage of total students in phase
High (Yr9-11)	103	49	32	184	29%
Middle	30	33	35	98	11%
First	25	3	8	36	4%
Total	158	83	76	317	13%

*\*These are the 3 most common alternatives of pupils who are educated outside of Berwick Partnership*



The data in Table 8 shows that 29% of high school age students (Year 9 to Year 11) living in the Berwick area choose to attend other schools; 11% of middle school age students (Years 5 to 8) attend these schools; and 4% of first school age pupils attend these schools. If the 183 high school age students who go out of the Berwick Partnership attended Berwick Academy, it would have an additional £915,000 in its budget each year. If the 94 middle school age students who leave the area attended, those schools would have an additional £470,000 in their budgets.

There are always a variety of reasons why parents/carers choose to send their children to certain schools, for example distance from home, proximity to relatives, while there will always be a percentage of parents who will send their children to private schools. However, some feedback received during the informal meetings with schools and via the community survey undertaken last Autumn (see later in this document) indicates there is a level of dissatisfaction with the educational pathway in the Berwick Partnership. While reversing the falling birth rate in the area would be difficult, it is possible that changes could be made within the Berwick Partnership that could persuade more parents and carers to send their children to their local schools – we are interested to hear your views on this issue as part of this consultation.

## Special Educational Needs

While many pupils with a special educational need (SEN) are able to remain in mainstream education, a significant number need more specialist help. The Grove School in Berwick provides specialist education to around 36 pupils who live in the Berwick Partnership area (although pupils also attend from outside the area as there are 48 on roll). However, there are a further 58 children living in the Berwick Partnership area with special educational needs on roll at 6 specialist provisions outside of the area, some of them travelling a considerable distance to and from school daily.

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 Berwick Partnership, as can be seen from the forecasts for number of children in special schools with ASD and SEMH in Table 9 and Table 10.

**Table 9- Forecast for number of pupils with ASD as a primary need living in Berwick Partnership**

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	1	1	4	1	6	6	8	4	16	5	9	3
Sep-23	3	2	1	6	2	7	8	7	8	15	7	8
Sep-24	3	4	2	2	7	2	9	7	15	8	22	6
Sep-25	3	4	4	2	2	8	2	8	15	15	11	20
Sep-26	2	4	4	5	3	2	10	2	18	15	22	10
Sep-27	3	3	4	5	6	3	3	9	5	17	22	20
Sep-28	3	3	3	5	6	7	4	3	20	5	26	20
Sep-29	3	3	3	4	6	7	9	4	6	20	7	23

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

**Table 10 - Forecast for number of pupils with SEMH as a primary need living in Berwick Partnership**

Forecasts by year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sep-22	0	3	2	9	16	18	8	13	8	9	13	7
Sep-23	0	0	5	3	11	20	15	10	12	9	9	10
Sep-24	0	0	0	8	4	14	16	17	9	13	9	6
Sep-25	0	0	0	1	9	4	11	19	16	10	13	7
Sep-26	1	0	0	0	1	11	4	13	18	17	10	10
Sep-27	0	1	0	0	1	1	9	4	12	19	17	7
Sep-28	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11	4	13	19	13
Sep-29	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	10	4	13	14

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

A small but significant number of children in the Berwick 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 Berwick Partnership have also presented the opportunity to have a 'joined-up' approach with mainstream education in the area.

While discussions with schools and relevant Council officers **will be taking place in the coming weeks on how the needs of this group of pupils could be addressed within the Berwick Partnership area that may lead to firm proposals being brought forward for SEND provision in the future, we welcome your views or ideas how this could be achieved as part of this consultation.**

### **Early Years Provision**

There are currently 20 Early Years provisions across the Berwick Partnership (including 9 schools). All provision is judged Good or above by Ofsted with the majority offering the free funded entitlement for eligible 2, 3 and 4 yr olds. Any specific proposals for Early Years provision linked to schools would be included in the next phase of consultation, but if you have any views or ideas relating to Early Years provision in the partnership at this stage, then we welcome them.

## **Post-16 Educational Offer**

As part of this consultation, we are also keen to hear about your views in relation to post-16 provision for young people living in the Berwick Partnership area. We are seeking your ideas about how post-16 provision could be improved and where, and these will help to shape a more detailed proposal to be put forward in the next phase of consultation.

# VIEWS OF SCHOOLS IN THE BERWICK PARTNERSHIP



Between April 2021 to March 2022, Council officers worked with headteachers and Chairs of Governors (and occasionally attended by other organisations) to look at the issues facing the Berwick Partnership set out earlier in this document.

A detailed summary of this work and its outcomes can be found in the document “Report of the Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children’s Services” which is available on the Northumberland County Council website at

<https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=1404>

A key piece of work achieved by this process was agreement on a Vision for Change for the Berwick Partnership as follows:

- **Improving Education Outcomes** at each phase to ensure every child meets their potential.
- **Sustainability of Education** across the whole of the Berwick Partnership for the long term.
- **Improving and extending SEND offer** for children and young people in Berwick Partnership so that their needs are met locally and travel times are reduced significantly.

- **Engaging the Berwick Community** in the review process to build an understanding of all the issues and to grow support for any proposed changes within schools in order that the community engages, supports and thrives.
- Ensure **schools work together** to further develop the partnership and create a sustainable model for the future.
- Underpinning the **best value for NCC capital Investment** as well as any wider investment opportunities which may arise.

In conjunction with the work undertaken by the Berwick Partnership, the Council initiated a high-level Community Survey between September and October 2021 to raise awareness of the main issues facing the Berwick Partnership and to gain an insight from the wider public in the area about their priorities for education. 436 responses were received to this survey, with almost half of respondents being parents. Table 11 sets the order in which key educational statements were prioritised by this group of stakeholders.

**Table 11 - Education priorities ranked by survey respondents**

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

The outcome of the work carried out with the Headteachers and Governing Bodies and the results of the Community Survey suggested that there are just two remaining options for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership at this point, which are the continuation of the current 3-tier system or reorganisation to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) system. However, there was an understanding that under either system, there would need to be agreed changes to address falling pupil numbers and improve educational standards in order to establish a viable and sustainable school system before the programme of capital investment in buildings could be undertaken.

### **Wooler First, Glendale Middle and Belford Primary Schools**

Another issue arose as a result of the work undertaken with schools in the partnership linked to school organisation was the question of whether Belford Primary, Wooler First and Glendale Middle Schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership or whether it would be more appropriate for the schools to become part of the Alnwick Partnership. This idea came forward as a result of the historically significant numbers of pupils who leave these schools at the end of Year 6 to join The Duchess High School in Year 7.

The key focus of this consultation is to seek your views on the organisation of schools, including which schools should remain within the Berwick Partnership.

# THREE-TIER AND TWO-TIER SCHOOL STRUCTURES - BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES



The purpose of this section of the document is not to persuade you to support either the 3-tier system or the 2-tier system of school organisation, but to present to you some of the information and rationale linked to both systems for you to consider before responding to the consultation. It is a fact that there has been very little academic discussion comparing these two systems of education in recent times, as nationally the majority of schools are organised within the primary/secondary structure and it simply is no longer an issue of wider debate. Likewise, we do not present educational outcomes of middle schools versus primary schools or high schools versus secondary schools as we could produce both good and bad examples of all types of school across Northumberland and beyond. Instead, we encourage you to consider the following information, but also consider your own or your children's experience of the school system in your area in the context of the issues facing the Berwick Partnership that we have highlighted earlier in this document. If you can, talk to the educational professionals in your local schools in the Berwick Partnership as these are the people who know what is working and what is not in the current system. You will also have the opportunity to do this at the planned public events.

## **Background to School Systems in Northumberland**

Prior to the publication of the Plowden Report in 1967, all schools in Northumberland were organised under the 2-tier (primary/secondary) or variations of it, with transfer from a primary or junior school to a secondary-type school at the age of 11. Northumberland introduced the 3-tier system of first, middle and high schools into the county in the 1970's



and it has therefore been in existence here for 50 years. Many other local authorities also introduced this system of school organisation at this time.

The rationale behind the 3-tier system was then somewhat undermined by the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989, which was based on the primary/secondary system.

Table 12 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 12 – Key Stages and Phase changes based on the National Curriculum**

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)	

In the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure, primary schools have responsibility for Early Years, KS1 and KS2, while secondary schools have responsibility for KS3, KS4 and KS5 (although in some areas local authorities have age 11-16 secondary schools and sixth form colleges).

Table 13 shows the age of children within a particular Year Group and Key stage of the National Curriculum as organised within the current 3-tier school structure in the Berwick Partnership

**Table 13 – 3-tier structure within the National Curriculum**

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 Middle School</b>			
9-10	Year 5	KS2	PRIMARY
10-11	Year 6	KS2 (Assessment)	
11-12	Year 7	KS3	SECONDARY
12-13	Year 8	KS3	
<b>Phase Change to High School</b>			
13-14	Year 9	KS3	SECONDARY
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)	

As can be seen from Table 13, there is a phase change from first to middle schools halfway through Key Stage 2, therefore the first schools have responsibility for KS2 in Years 3 and 4, while middle schools have responsibility for teaching KS2 in Years 5 and 6, including assessment at the end of Year 6. Middle schools then have the responsibility for the first two years of KS3, when there is another phase change to high school which picks up responsibility for the last year of KS3 and then the whole of KS4 to KS5.

As a result of the introduction of the National Curriculum Key Stages, discussions around what is the best system for the organisation of schools in Northumberland have been taking place since the early 1990's. In 2005, a programme of reorganisation of all schools in the county to the 2-tier system was launched by the Council Administration at that time under the title 'Putting the Learner First'. Cramlington and then Blyth Partnerships were the first to change to the 2-tier system in 2007/2008 and these were followed by Hirst Partnership in 2009. A change of administration in 2009 and the economic crash at that time halted the Putting the Learner First programme. Since that time, reorganisation of school partnerships to the 2-tier system has occurred wholly or in part as a result of the need to react to a failing middle school (e.g. Bedlington and Haydon Bridge), or as a result of requests to the Council from school partnerships themselves to consult on change (e.g. Alnwick, Ponteland).

Of the 13 school partnerships in Northumberland, 7 are now organised within the 2-tier system; St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy and its feeder primary schools in the South

East of the county are also organised within the 2-tier system (although there are a number of RC first school academies in parts of the county). Therefore, 6 partnerships are organised within the 3-tier system (although consultation is currently under way on whether the Coquet Partnership should change to the 2-tier system). While the partnerships are split almost evenly in terms of organisation, in fact 26,013 of the 39,911 pupils on roll in schools in Reception to Year 13 (excluding special schools) are educated in within the 2-tier system of school structure i.e. 65%.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the Three Tier System**

In January 2018, the National Middle Schools' Forum reported that in 1982 there were 1,816 middle schools. They also reported that in 2019, there were 107 middle schools in England operating within 14 local authority areas, including Northumberland. Most remaining middle schools in the country are organised as 'middle deemed secondary', having year groups within both primary and secondary phases, while there are around 6 remaining 'middle deemed primary' middle schools in the south of the country.

Other authorities in the North East with middle schools are Newcastle and North Tyneside, which like Northumberland, have a mixture of both 3-tier and 2-tier systems across their authority areas.

The National Middle Schools Forum cites the following as advantages of the 3-tier system:

- 3-tier system is suited to rural areas or catchment areas of smaller market towns;
- Middle Schools are uniquely placed for creative flexibility of organisation to meet the needs of pupils going through wide-ranging intellectual, physical and emotional development;
- By spanning parts of both KS2 and KS3, middle schools can use the outcomes of KS2 assessments to benefit the learning of pupils;
- The gradual introduction of specialist teaching maintains enthusiasm and widens interests;
- Joint curriculum planning across the phases of the 3-tier system is essential in order to deliver good outcomes in the shared Key Stages.
- Middle schools offer a wide variety of extra-curricular activities in sport, music, art etc.;
- School climate nurtures support by being child-centred and small enough for children to be known personally.

- Curriculum is balanced between subject-centred and pupil-centred needs of the pupils and promotes self-esteem, self-knowledge and a foundation for lifelong learning.

As stated, there is little or no academic literature comparing the 3-tier and 2-tier systems in this country as it is a non-topic outside of the areas where middle schools exist.

Therefore, many of the disadvantages cited in relation to the 3-tier system are to be found in the reports of local authorities who have or are proposing changes to the school structure in their area. For example, Central Bedfordshire Council, which has a mixed organisation of schools like Northumberland, published on its website the following statements:

- Teacher training is now focused on the primary/secondary model;
- Only one transfer in the 2-tier model so less disruptive in the pupils' educational pathway and simpler.

Feedback in 2016 from statutory consultation on the proposals to reorganise Alnwick Partnership included these comments from educational professionals:

- The 3-tier system is a dysfunctional model for the most effective delivery of the National Curriculum;
- The split of KS2 between first and middle schools and KS3 between middle and high schools provides threats to the effective educational progress of children as it causes problems with the continuity of learning and teaching, support for pupils, the delivery of the curriculum and the ability of schools to recruit Middle school specialist teachers.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of the 2-tier system**

Responses from education professionals arising from consultation on proposals for reorganisation of the Ponteland Partnership in favour of the 2-tier system included:

- Attainment will improve faster through changing to 2-tier rather than through introducing initiatives within the 3-tier system;
- Pupils will have an additional 2 years of work in their secondary schools
- Single transition points in 2-tier work effectively for pupils

Advantages of the 2-tier system cited by Northumberland County Council under the Putting the Learner First programme in 2005 remain worthy of consideration in relation to the organisation of schools today:

- One transition point for students, and one transfer of information between 2 schools;
- School age ranges would match the National Curriculum Key Stages;
- Recruitment and retention of teachers should improve;
- KS3 pupils would be taught in 11-18 secondary schools with a wider range of facilities, equipment and specialist teaching.
- First schools and high schools would increase in size and offer wider curriculum opportunities; small first schools in particular would improve their financial situation.

Likewise, the Council at that time cited some perceived disadvantages of reorganisation:

- Changes creates uncertainty and insecurity amongst children and staff
- Schools are always under pressure re standards and organisation change will add to it;
- Small primary schools wouldn't have the specialist facilities of middle schools.
- Transfer of pupils from very small primary schools to large secondary schools could be daunting.

### **Forming Your Views**

Before you complete the questionnaire, it is important that you understand that in the light of the falling pupil population in the Berwick Partnership, there will need to be some changes made to schools and how they are organised whether the 3-tier system remains in place or whether schools are reorganised to a 2-tier or other model; these changes could include some school closures. Details of proposed changes would be brought forward in the next phase of consultation.

So, we would like you to consider what system will be better placed to ensure that as many as possible of the pupils who do live in the Berwick Partnership area choose to remain in their local schools throughout their educational journey in order to support a viable and sustainable school system and improve outcomes for all pupils, whatever their abilities.

## Alternative Proposals

While this consultation has presented information relating to the 3-tier and 2-tier systems of school organisation, you may have an alternative suggestion for addressing the issues facing the Berwick Partnership 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?

Public drop-in events have been arranged during this consultation period for you to find out further information about any aspect of this proposal.

#### Public Drop-in events

**Date: Wednesday 13 July, 5.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street, Belford, NE70 7QB**

**Date: Saturday 16 July, 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Berwick Community Trust, The William Elder Building, 56-58 Castlegate, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1JT**

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

There will also be a separate event for staff working in schools in the Berwick Partnership during the consultation period. Staff will be contacted directly with the date and time of this drop-in session.

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

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 12 week consultation on the proposals set out in this consultation document began on **Monday 23 May and will end at midnight on 12 August 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/berwick-partnership-your-views-on-school-organisat> **(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 Organisation in Berwick 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**

# BERWICK PARTNERSHIP - YOUR VIEWS ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION

## Overview

Northumberland County Council has committed £39.9m towards the replacement and refurbishment of school buildings in the Berwick Partnership. However, before carrying out the works to school buildings, 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 now and for the future generations to come.

Schools in the Berwick Partnership are facing some specific issues. In early 2021, Council officers began talking to Headteachers and school Chairs of Governors about how schools could be organised in order to overcome these issues and a number of 'models' of organisation were reviewed and assessed - a summary of these discussions and their outcomes is set out in this document. The key conclusion of these discussions was that before any detailed proposals for individual schools linked to the buildings funding could be brought forward, the views of parents, staff, governors, pupils, the wider public and anyone with an interest in education in the Berwick Partnership area needed to be gathered on the general principle of whether schools should be organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or within the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure. Once this principle is established, more detailed proposals for individual schools can be brought forward.

This consultation document sets out those key issues faced by schools in the partnership, an overview of the current structure and the 2-tier structure at a Northumberland and national level, and data and information about pupil numbers and performance of schools. As a result, I'm afraid this is a long document. However, we believe it's really important that you are provided with the information that you need to be able to form your views before you respond to this consultation. You should also bear in mind that this consultation is not a referendum and any decision about the structure of schools will be based on the quality of the educational rationale, not on the number of responses for one structure or another. So, as well as asking for your thoughts about the 3-tier and 2-tier school structures, we are also asking if you have any alternative suggestions that you think could address the issues raised in this document that would secure a viable school system in the Berwick Partnership for the children and young people living in this area.

We are also running two public events in the coming Summer Term (details later in this document) where you will be able to ask further questions from schools and Council officers – hopefully you will be able to attend one of them. I really hope that you will take the time and opportunity to submit your views and I look forward to hopefully meeting you in July.

Audrey Kingham

Interim Executive Director of Children's Services

Northumberland County Council

## Introduction

1 What is your name?

2 What is your email address?

3 What is your postcode (eg.TD15 2JF)?

*(Required)*





## 4 In what capacity are you responding to the consultation

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Berwick Academy
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Berwick Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Belford Primary
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Holy Trinity CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Hugh Joicey CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Lowick First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Holy Island First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Scremerston First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Spittal First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending St Cuthbert's RC First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending St Mary's CE First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Tweedmouth West First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Wooler First
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending Glendale Middle
- Parent/Carer of a pupil currently attending The Grove
- Staff Member of Berwick Academy
- Staff Member of Berwick Middle
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth Middle
- Staff Member of Belford Primary
- Staff Member of Holy Trinity CE First
- Staff Member of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Staff Member of Lowick First
- Staff Member of Holy Island CE First
- Staff Member of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Staff Member of Scremerston First
- Staff Member of Spittal First
- Staff Member of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Staff Member of St Mary's CE First
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Staff Member of Tweedmouth West First
- Staff Member of Wooler First
- Staff Member of Glendale Middle
- Staff Member of The Grove
- Governor of Berwick Academy
- Governor of Berwick Middle
- Governor of Tweedmouth Middle
- Governor of Belford Primary
- Governor of Holy Trinity CE First
- Governor of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Governor of Lowick First
- Governor of Holy Island First
- Governor of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Governor of Scremerston First
- Governor of Spittal First
- Governor of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Governor of St Mary's CE First
- Governor of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Governor of Tweedmouth West First
- Governor of Wooler First

- Governor of Glendale Middle
- Governor of The Grove
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Academy
- Student/Pupil of Berwick Middle
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth Middle
- Student/Pupil of Belford Primary
- Student/Pupil of Holy Trinity CE First
- Student/Pupil of Hugh Joicey CE First
- Student/Pupil of Lowick
- Student/Pupil of Holy Island First
- Student/Pupil of Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Student/Pupil of Scremerston First
- Student/Pupil of Spittal First
- Student/Pupil of St Cuthbert's RC First
- Student/Pupil of St Mary's CE First
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth Prior Park First
- Student/Pupil of Tweedmouth West First
- Student/Pupil of Wooler First
- Student/Pupil of Glendale Middle
- Student/Pupil of The Grove
- 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 Berwick Town Council
- Councillor of Adderstone with Lucker Parish Council
- Councillor of Ancroft Parish Council
- Councillor of Beadnell Parish Council
- Councillor of Belford with Middleton Parish Council
- Councillor of Berwick Parish Council
- Councillor of Bowsden Parish Council
- Councillor of Branxton Parish Council
- Councillor of Chatton Parish Council
- Councillor of Carham Parish Council
- Councillor of Chillingham Parish Council
- Councillor of Cornhill on Tweed Parish Council
- Councillor of Doddington Parish Council
- Councillor of Duddo Parish Council
- Councillor of Ford Parish Council
- Councillor of Holy Island Parish Council
- Councillor of Horncliffe Parish Council
- Councillor of Ingram Parish Council
- Councillor of Kirknewton Parish Council
- Councillor of Kyloe Parish Council
- Councillor of Lowick Parish Council
- Councillor of Milfield Parish Council
- Councillor of Norham Parish Council
- Councillor of Ord Parish Council
- Councillor of Shoreswood Parish Council
- Councillor of Wooler Parish Council
- Resident/member of the community living in the Berwick Partnership
- Resident/member of the community living outside of the Berwick Partnership
- Other – please state



5 If you stated other above, please state below

Consultation document



6 Having read the consultation document, do you think schools in the Berwick Partnership will be better able to deliver improved outcomes and safeguard their viability for future generations if they are organised within the current 3-tier (first/middle/high) structure or if they are reorganised to the 2-tier (primary/secondary) structure?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Three-tier (current structure, phase change at end of Year 4)
- Two-tier (primary/secondary structure, phase change at end of Year 6)
- DON'T KNOW

7 Please give the reasons for your answer below or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**8** Do you have an alternative option for school organisation in the Berwick Partnership that would address the issues outlined in this document that you would like us to consider? Please give your alternative option here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**9** Having read the consultation document, do you think Glendale Middle school and Wooler First should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Remain in the Berwick Partnership
- Move to the Alnwick Partnership
- Don't Know

**10** Please give the reasons for your answer here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**11** Having read the consultation document, do you think Belford Primary School should remain in the Berwick Partnership or move to the Alnwick Partnership?

*(Required)*

*Please select only one item*

- Remain in the Berwick Partnership
- Move to the Alnwick Partnership
- Don't Know

**12** Please give the reasons for your answer here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**13** Having read the consultation document, do you have any suggestions on how additional specialist provision could be delivered within the Berwick Partnership in order to meet the growing numbers of children and young people being assessed as having SEMH and ASD in this area and to enable them to receive their education within or as close to their home communities as possible? Please set out your comments here or state 'None':

*(Required)*

**14** Having read the consultation document, do you have any comments about the current level or availability of early years provision in the Berwick Partnership area? Please set out your comments here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**15** Having read the consultation document, do you have any suggestions on what Post-16 provision would be useful to assist young people in the Berwick Partnership area to support their academic or technical development?. Please set out your comments here or state 'None'

*(Required)*

**16** Do you have any general or additional comments that you would like the Council's Cabinet to consider in relation to any of the issues raised in this consultation document?(If not, please state none). Please set out your comments here or 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.



**Phase 1 Pre-Consultation Register – NCC**

**Consultation Register – NCC**

**Proposals for the Berwick Partnership**

**Consultation – 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**Consultees**

Schools in Berwick Partnership directly affected by proposals – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:

- Berwick Academy
- Berwick Middle
- Tweedmouth Middle
- Belford Primary
- St Mary's CE First
- Holy Trinity CE First
- Hugh Joicey CE First
- Lowick & Holy Isalnd First
- Norham St Ceolwulfs CE First
- Scremerston First
- Spittal First
- St Cuthbert's RC First
- Tweedmouth Prior Park
- Tweedmouth West
- Wooler FS/Glendale MS
- The Grove

Other Northumberland Schools in local area possibly affected – Staff, Governors and Parents/Carers:

- Branton Community Primary
- Ellingham C of E Aided Primary
- Embleton Vincent Edwards C of E Primary
- Felton C of E Primary
- Hipsburn Primary
- Longhoughton C of E Primary
- Seahouses Primary
- Shilbottle Primary
- St Michaels C of E Primary
- St. Paul's RC Voluntary Aided Primary
- Swansfield Park Primary

- Swarland Primary
- The Duchess's Community High
- Whittingham C of E Primary

**Public**

- NCC Website
- Libraries – Berwick and Wooler

**Diocesan representatives**

- CE, Paul Rickeard
- RC, Deborah Fox

**Town & Parish Councils**

- Berwick Town Council
- Adderstone with Lucker
- Ancroft
- Beadnell
- Belford with Middleton
- Berwick
- Bowsden
- Branxton
- Carham
- Cornhill on Tweed
- Doddington
- Duddo
- Ford
- Holy Island
- Horncliffe
- Ingram
- Kirknewton
- Kyloe
- Lowick
- Milfield
- Norham
- Ord
- Shoreswood
- Wooler

**Local MP (for information/response)**

- Annemarie Trevelyn MP

**Local Members (for information/response)**

- Wooler ED (split) Alnwick (*Cllr. Mark Mather*)

- Norham and Islandshires ED (*Cllr. Colin Hardy*)
- Berwick North ED (*Cllr. Catherine Seymour*)
- Berwick West with Ord ED (*Cllr. Isabel Hunter*)
- Berwick East ED (*Cllr. Georgina Hill*)
- Bamburgh ED (split) Alnwick (*Cllr. Guy Renner-Thompson*)

**Neighbouring Local Authorities**

- Scottish Borders Council

**Parent Carer Forum****Unions**

- NEU
- NASUWT
- Unison
- ASCL
- NAHT
- GMB

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## Northumberland County Council

### **CABINET**

**11<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

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#### **Supported Accommodation and Lodgings for Care Leavers and Young Homeless – Permission to Tender**

Report of: The Service Director of Children's Social Care & Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, Graham Reiter

Report of Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People

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#### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to:

Seek permission from Cabinet to go to the market to commission a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties.

The intention is to create a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which will allow the Council to contract with a variety of pre-qualified suppliers, supporting access to a range of placements across the County for eligible young people. Unlike a framework arrangement, a DPS allows suppliers to join at pre-agreed points of time, encouraging competition and making it easier for local suppliers to access the arrangement. This will support the Council in meeting its duties during a time of change; Ofsted regulation for this sector is due to be introduced in late 2023 and is expected to cause some disruption within the marketplace as providers determine whether they are willing and able to meet the new guidelines. A DPS will create a more flexible solution providing the Council with improved access to suppliers in order to meet need.

The DPS will be for an initial period 10 years although actual expenditure levels will fluctuate in line with demand.

#### **Recommendations**

The Cabinet is recommended:

1. To note the information presented in this report regarding the creation of a Dynamic Purchasing System to support access to a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless.

2. To note that the value of this contract is approximately £1.25M per annum which over a 10-year period suggests a total value of £12.50M.
3. To authorise the Service Director of Children's Social Care & Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, to undertake a procurement exercise and award of the contracts.

### **Links to NCC Corporate Plan 2021 – 24**

The procurement of these services will contribute across most of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities but particularly to "living and learning". The procurement of supported accommodation and lodgings services for care leavers and young homeless shows that the Council are committed to providing sustainable support to children and families into the future.

### **Key Issues**

1. The Council has a responsibility to provide support and accommodation to:
  - Looked After young people and Care leavers under the Children Act 1989.
  - Young people presenting as homeless and needing accommodation in line with the Statutory guidance - Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.
  - Separated children (formally known as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children).
  - Young people who require support after the age of 18 in line with the Staying Put agenda.
  - Other young people aged 16 and above who are beyond school leaving age who may require provision under this service as and when they meet varying Local Authority thresholds.
2. This responsibility is overseen by the Accommodation Service which sits within the Council's Adolescent Services (NAS). They work alongside Social Workers and Leaving Care Support Workers, as well as officers from the Youth Justice Service to ensure that young people have access to appropriate accommodation and support to meet their needs.
3. Although there are appropriate checks in place to ensure that accommodation and support is delivered to a high standard this is currently unregulated. This will change following the Government's announcement that it will implement mandatory national standards for supported accommodation for young people and will require Ofsted to register and inspect this provision. This is due to come into effect in late 2023 and is expected to cause some disruption within the marketplace as providers determine whether they are willing and able to meet the new guidelines. A DPS will create a more flexible solution during this period of change allowing suppliers to join the arrangement throughout the lifetime of the agreement and improving access to service provision.
4. Given the varying needs of young people and depending on their progress towards independence a range of services are required. Outlined below are the

commissioning intentions which will enable the Council to meet its duties in respect of this vulnerable cohort of young people.

## **Background**

In order to meet the needs of young people two key protocols have been developed:

- A Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol for young people leaving care and
- A Joint Housing Protocol has been developed for homeless 16/17 year olds.

Both protocols have a shared vision of ensuring young people receive the appropriate support to meet their accommodation and support needs and underpin the practice of both Housing Services and Children Services.

The intention is to commission integrated services so that there is a clear pathway of support, with access to accommodation and services that will provide an opportunity for progression for young people, enabling them to achieve greater capability of independent living.

The following services are required to meet need:

- **Single Occupancy Accommodation for Complex Young People at Risk** – this comprises accommodation and floating support delivered flexibly for young people who have a complex range of needs
- **Single Occupancy Accommodation for Young People at Risk with a Range of Needs** – this comprises accommodation and floating support delivered flexibly for young people at risk and who present with a range of needs
- **Group Accommodation** – this consists of individual rooms/flats with shared communal kitchen, bathroom and living room in an accommodation block, which must be fully furnished and well-appointed. Floating support must also be provided. This service is required to meet the needs of young people who are at significant risk or who are homeless.
- **Floating Support** – Floating Support workers will help young people to understand what it means to live independently and support them in achieving this. This may include support with housing issues, help with budgeting, education and training, debt advice, health advice and other areas as needed.
- **Supported Lodgings** - Supported Lodgings provides young people with a room in a home environment and the support and guidance of an adult or adults living there. Support and guidance can cover a huge range of areas, from helping young people develop life skills, through to simply allowing them to experience the ups and downs of living in a family group.



## Implications

<p><b>Policy</b></p>	<p>This procedure follows LA Statutory regulations (2012) that ensure transparent commissioning procedure is followed on behalf of Local Authority commissioning of services.</p> <p>National standards for independent and semi-independent provision for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 are due to be introduced in late 2023 which will be overseen by Ofsted. This requirement will be reflected within the tender specification.</p>
<p><b>Finance and value for money</b></p>	<p>Annual expenditure is estimated at £1.25M.</p> <p>Commissioning intentions have been developed to reflect statutory requirements. Through adopting an integrated model, the aspiration is that young people will receive an integrated service and can be supported to transition into adulthood.</p> <p>Value for money will be achieved via an open market procurement exercise.</p>
<p><b>Legal</b></p>	<p>The creation of a DPS requires support from Legal to develop the appropriate contractual documentation.</p>
<p><b>Procurement</b></p>	<p>The value of the proposal requires that an open market procurement exercise be undertaken in order to be compliant.</p> <p>The existing contract for the Supported Accommodation framework expires in January 23 although there is an option to extend. A re-commissioning exercise to create a DPS will be undertaken in 2022/23 to create a more flexible approach to engaging a range of providers.</p>
<p><b>Human Resources</b></p>	<p>In the event of the incumbent organisation(s) not being awarded the contract, TUPE considerations for current service staff will be the responsibility of the new provider and will be built into the contract arrangement.</p>
<p><b>Property</b></p>	<p>This is the responsibility of the Provider organisation(s) and will be built into the contract arrangement.</p>
<p><b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>All Providers are expected to have an Equality and Diversity Policy and ensure that staff are trained appropriately.</p>

<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Included as part of standard Local Authority commissioning and procurement practice. The Local Authority is required to ensure commissioning of services is competitively tendered. If this tender is agreed by Cabinet, the risk of challenge will be mitigated.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	These services may support young people who may have had or still have links to the criminal justice system
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The individual needs of young people are at the centre of the procurement process and subsequent service delivery. Providers will be expected to obtain regular feedback from young people. Results will be shared at Contract Management meetings which will be held quarterly.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Providers will be expected to participate in the Northumberland's Landlord Accreditation Scheme where appropriate. This includes the need for properties to hold an Energy Performance certificate which contributes to the Council's climate change and carbon footprint goals.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Providing a high-quality service to support vulnerable young people will have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing. There is an expectation that Providers will support young people to enjoy good physical, emotional and mental health, encouraging a healthy lifestyle and supporting access to information about health issues that allows them to make informed choices.
<b>Wards</b>	All

### **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**

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## Northumberland County Council

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

**6<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

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#### **The Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Plan 2022-2026**

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

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

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#### **Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to present to FACS members and particularly those members involved in the Exclusion Task and Finish Group, the first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy which has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- 1) The content of the report and detailed strategy be noted paying particular attention to the impact the work undertaken within Children's Services and Schools has had on the lives of Northumberland children.

#### **Links 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. A report on the findings and recommendations of the Exclusion Task and Finish Group was presented to FACS at the end of November 2019 and a further update on the actions taken was also reported to FACS in March 2021. It was at this meeting the FACS members supported:

**The Development of a five year Inclusion Strategy for Northumberland. "A VISION FOR THE NEW NORTHUMBERLAND APPROACH"**

The Strategy will have:

- A clear moral purpose that makes exclusions the responsibility of everyone in Northumberland;
  - Financial realism through a shared understanding of the High Needs Block funding;
  - A robust core purpose, supported by agreed regulation and fair processes;
  - Urgent and driving actions to create a coherent core offer of support that schools subscribe to and drive down exclusions and encourage inclusive practice.
2. There is a huge amount of positive work going on in Northumberland to support the wellbeing and inclusion of children and young people. One of the main functions of “The Northumberland Strategic Inclusion” Strategy **APPENDIX 1** is to map the available approaches, services and resources across the County to ensure a robust overview of the offer, as well as the identification of any gaps that need to be addressed.
  3. The strategy document:
    - Describes the National context;
    - Describes the Northumberland context;
    - Describes the key strands of the strategy;
    - Identifies the actions to be taken to promote inclusion and prevent exclusion;
    - Describes the role of the Local Authority, schools, settings and partners in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusions.
  4. The development of this strategy has been co-produced by the multi-agency working groups, discussions with Headteachers, SENCOs, designated teachers, governors, alternative providers, discussions at the Education Strategy Board and the views of parents, carers, children and young people. The strategy draws heavily from examples of the strong leadership and good practice that already exists in many Northumberland early years’ settings, schools and Post 16 provisions where there is robust evidence of strong inclusive practice and a reduction in the use of exclusion.
  5. Progress on the implementation of the Inclusion Strategy will be reported to and monitored by the Education Strategy Board and will be kept under review and altered as necessary to incorporate newly published legislation and statutory guidance.
  6. The impact of COVID is now starting to show within Northumberland resulting in a rise in both permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions/suspensions. A new trend is starting to emerge with a specific increase for pupils in years 7 and 8. We believe this is due to the time missed in years 5 and 6 in primary schools and the challenge with implementation of transitional arrangements to prepare these year groups for secondary school. A breakdown of exclusion by

school for the last 4 years can be found at APPENDIX 2

## 7. Exclusions in Northumberland

	Permanent Exclusions				Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Pupil population	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
2014/15	44	4	16	39,597	1599	143	355
2015/16	41	0	26	39,602	1270	221	704
2016/17	75	3	39	39,422	1967	133	767
2017/18	115	6	53	39,598	4514	291	1347
2018/19	83	4	23	39,684	3490	180	769
2019/20	50	0	12	39,795	1696	112	391
2020/21	44	0	11	40,070	2144	172	642
2021/22	94	1	56	40,059	4027	372	1100

In response to the rise in fixed and permanent exclusions, funding was secured in 2020 to expand the team with the addition of two extra Inclusion Officers. COMF funding was also used to appoint two Parent Support Partners in Nov 2021 to support children/families predominantly from First and Primary Schools. Intelligence has suggested that younger children have been more adversely affected by the pandemic as they have missed out on the intervention required to make them 'school ready'. Primary schools are reporting more concerns with children in Reception and Year 1.

Since Jan 2021 to date, the team of five Officers has worked with 249 children at risk of permanent exclusion. Only 29 of those pupils actually went on to be excluded meaning that 88% of those referred have remain in mainstream education.

In September 2021 a Lead Officer was assigned to oversee managed moves to ensure young people were given the best opportunity for success in a new setting. Previously only an average of 1 in 5 managed moves was successful but this year of the 29 completed moves 19 have been successful and 10 have been unsuccessful; the success rate has more than tripled from 20% to 65%.

8. Whilst it remains a challenge both nationally and locally to reduce PEX and improve the life chances of some of our most vulnerable children and young people, the Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy provides a multi-agency approach to support children, young people, their families and schools to ensure every child and young person has access to the most suitable education setting to meet their needs and are supported in order that they achieve their potential.
9. In the recent consultation green paper on proposed SEND and AP reform, there is a clear drive to create a national vision for alternative provision and an expectation that every local area will develop a Local Inclusion Plan, it is

therefore seen that our Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy will develop into The Northumberland Inclusion Plan.

## **Background**

1. Following the report on Exclusions that was taken to Scrutiny on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018, it was agreed that: '*...a Task and Finish Group be created in order to try to address the rising level of exclusions within the County*'. The Task and Finish Group would be set up to investigate the issue further and to make recommendations to Scrutiny to try to improve the current situation. The Exclusions Task and Finish Group met five times between December 2018 and April 2019. It had a core membership of elected members, county council officers and teacher association representation. In addition, guest speakers were called to each meeting to enable group members to better understand the situation in both Northumberland and across the rest of the country.
2. A report on the findings and recommendations of the exclusion task and finish group were presented to FACS at the end of November 2019. And a further report on progress on implementing the Inclusion action plan was also presented to FACS 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy</b>	The procedures adopted by the council for permanently excluded pupils fulfil its statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 section 19(3A) and (3B).
<b>Finance &amp; value for money</b>	
<b>Legal</b>	N/A
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources:</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment Attached)	No
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	N/A
<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 detail set out in this report are based upon a desire to act in the best educational interests of current and future children and young people in Northumberland.
<b>Carbon Reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have a significant positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	
<b>Wards</b>	All

## CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Cllr Renner Thompson.

## Report Sign Off

	Full name
Service Director Finance & Deputy S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Interim Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Joint Interim Director of Children's Services	Audrey Kingham
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Lead Member for Children's Services	Guy Renner-Thompson

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## **Appendices**

Appendix one - The Northumberland Strategic Inclusions Strategy

Appendix Two - Exclusion data by School

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# The Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy

Promoting Inclusion and Preventing  
Exclusion Strategy

2022-2026

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# The Vision

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Northumberland's vision is to have 'One council that works for everyone' underpinned by four key values; Excellence and Quality, Respect, Residents First, and Keeping Our Communities Safe and Well. Critical to the delivery of the vision is supporting the citizens of Northumberland to achieve their potential, and benefit from the County's economic recovery and growth, while tackling inequalities within our communities and supporting our residents to be healthier and happier.

Our Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2022 translates the Corporate Plan into a vision that is focused on 'being a place where meeting the needs of children, young people and families is the focus, so that they get the best out of life', this means:

- Children and young people know that their voice will influence decisions that affect them.
- Children and young people have the 'Best Start in Life'.
- Ensuring all services work together towards tackling any form of disadvantage.
- Children and young people have access to the best quality education to prepare them for adult life.
- Children and young people feel safe and supported and are able to cope with life's ups and downs.
- Promoting and supporting children and young people to be healthy.



## Education Priorities

At the heart of the education priorities is ensuring every child meets their potential and makes a positive contribution to their local community this is set out below in the 12 priorities that drive the work of the Education and Skills Central Services.

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

**07** We will support all first and primary schools to ensure their pupils have all the skills and knowledge required to access the secondary curriculum.

We will know the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and other educational providers, challenge and support them to improve and report their performance to the Council and the community. **02**

We will transform transition, progress and performance for our Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 and improve their access to their first choice University place, Further Education, Higher Apprenticeship and/or employment. **08**

**03** We will lead the development of an overall strategy to ensure our residents and their families are able to access appropriate and inclusive provision in Northumberland that meets their needs as close to their homes as is possible.

**09** We will work in partnership across services to ensure our children are supported through Social Care, Virtual school and Community Hub supporting their health and well-being (including mental health), feel safe, in touch, listened to and supported every week of the year and not just term time.

We will develop an alternative education model which offers routes for children which support their future career choice, the model may also support keeping our children in education and provide a positive and financially viable contribution to our communities. **04**

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

**05** In partnership with all stakeholders, including education, health and social care, we will lead on the implementation of the Local Area 0-25 SEND Strategy to ensure learners with SEND achieve best outcomes.

**11** We will develop a strategy and create an appropriate curriculum supporting the needs of all our young people and adults in Northumberland so that more can access suitable/appropriate/good fit apprenticeships, skills training and development to underpin careers, employment and in work progression.

We will work across the early years sector to ensure all children are school ready and that the schools are ready for every child. **06**

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

**“Learning is a lifelong process of keeping abreast of change. And the most pressing task is to teach people how to learn.”**

**Peter Drucker**

**“I attribute my success to this - I never took or gave any excuse..”**

**Florence Nightingale**

Research has shown that young people who are excluded from school are more likely to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), develop significant mental health problems, and become involved with the criminal justice system either in their teens or as an adult. Reducing exclusion from education and ensuring all Northumberland's early years' settings, schools and Post 16 providers are inclusive and able to meet the needs of their local communities is a key priority for Northumberland County Council to ensure improved experiences and outcomes for all children and young people.

Northumberland's Inclusion Strategy has been developed to help the Local Authority, early years' settings, schools, Post 16 providers and other services work in a more holistic way to reduce exclusions. The strategy provides an outline of approaches, interventions and services to support settings to ensure the needs of all young people are understood and addressed in order to prevent the use of exclusion wherever possible.

There is a huge amount of positive work going on in Northumberland to support the well-being and inclusion of children and young people. One of the main functions of this strategy is to map the available approaches, services and resources across the County to ensure a robust overview of the offer, as well as the identification of any gaps that need to be addressed.

The development of this strategy has been co-produced by the multi-agency working groups, discussions with Head Teachers, SENCOs, designated teachers, governors, alternative providers, discussions at the Education Strategy Board and the views of parents, carers, children & young people. The strategy draws heavily from examples of the strong leadership and good practice that already exists in many Northumberland early years' settings, schools and Post 16 provisions where there is robust evidence of strong inclusive practice and a reduction in the use of exclusion.

Progress on the implementation of the Inclusion Strategy will be reported to and monitored by the Education Strategy Board and will be kept under review and altered as necessary to incorporate newly published legislation and statutory guidance.

This strategy document:

- Describes the National context;
- Describes the Northumberland context;
- Describes the key strands of the strategy;
- Identifies the actions to be taken to promote inclusion and prevent exclusion;
- Describes the role of the Local Authority, schools, settings and partners in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusions.

Related strategies and plans that have a direct impact on reducing and preventing school exclusions include:

- Education and Skills priorities;
- Northumberland County Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2024;
- Northumberland Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2022;
- Northumberland Safeguarding Children's Board – Neglect Strategy;
- Northumberland Multi Year Accessibility Plan 2022-2025;
- Northumberland SEND Strategy 2021-2024.



# National Context

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The National Review of Exclusions in 2017/18 found that 0.1% of children overall were permanently excluded from state funded schools in England, but the rates for some groups of children were much higher. The Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, which collates data on how different ethnic groups interact with public services, highlighted that pupils from some ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately more likely to be excluded from school. Black Caribbean pupils, for example, were permanently excluded at three times the rate of White British pupils. White Gypsy Roma group and the traveller of Irish Heritage group pupils had by far the highest rates of both fixed period and permanent exclusions.

All state funded schools in England operate under the same exclusions framework, as set out in legislation and statutory guidance. Despite this, there are differences in exclusion rates between schools, areas of the country, and pupils with different characteristics.

Following their review of alternative provision across the Country, the House of Commons Education Committee published a report on 18th July 2018 [“Forgotten Children: alternative provision and scandal of ever-increasing exclusions”](#) This report sets out a number of key recommendations to drive improved inclusion practices in schools and reductions in exclusions:

- Schools should not rush to exclude pupils: schools should be inclusive.
- Parents and pupils have a right to know how often schools resort to exclusion: schools should publish their permanent and fixed term exclusion rates every term, including for pupils with SEND and looked-after children, as well as the number of pupils who leave the school.
- Parents deserve more information when their children are excluded: the exclusions process is currently weighted in favour of schools and leaves parents and pupils fighting a system that should be supporting them.

- Pupils and their parents should have someone in their corner: when a pupil is excluded from school for more than five non-consecutive days in a school year, the pupil and their parents or carers should be given access to an independent advocate. This should happen both where pupils are internally or externally excluded from school or where the LA is arranging education due to illness.
- Parents and pupils should be given accurate information about the range and type of alternative provision that is available locally: all organisations offering alternative provision should be required to inform the local authority in which they are based of their provision. The local authority should then make the list of alternative providers operating in their local authority available to schools and parents on their website.
- Independent Review Panels should be able to direct a school to reinstate pupils: legislation should be amended at the next opportunity so that this can happen.”

As a result of this report, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a call for evidence on school exclusion to support a national review of exclusions to be led by Edward Timpson.





[The final Timpson Review](#) of Exclusions was published on 7th May 2019.

The report contains 30 recommendations which have all been welcomed by the Secretary of State for Education. The government has committed to undertaking six key actions in response to these recommendations:

1. We will make schools accountable for the outcomes of permanently excluded children.
2. We will establish a practice programme that embeds effective partnership working between LAs, schools, alternative provision, and other partners.
3. We will work with sector experts, led by the Department's lead advisor on behaviour, Tom Bennet, to rewrite our guidance (including on exclusions and on behaviour and discipline in schools)
4. We now call on Directors of Children's Services, governing bodies, academy trusts and local forums of schools to review information on children who leave schools, by exclusion or otherwise, and to establish a shared understanding of how the data on the characteristics of such children feeds local trends.

5. We will work with Ofsted to define and tackle the practice of "off-rolling".
6. We will extend support for Alternative Provision (AP).

The full set of 30 recommendations will be considered and appropriately acted upon through the implementation of Northumberland's Inclusion Strategy.

In response to the Timpson Review, the Government launched a consultation to seek views on proposed changes to the behaviour in schools' guidance and the suspension and permanent exclusion guidance for England. This consultation closed on 31st March 2022.

This Strategy will take into account the recommendations coming from national government.

# Northumberland Local Context

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In Northumberland, 96.7% of the land mass is classed as rural, with 46% of the population living in this area. The other 54% of the population live mainly in the South East area of the county. In relation to the population itself, the county has an estimated population of 323,820 (mid-year population estimates 2020, a 0.4% growth on the 2019 estimate, which had also seen slight increase from the previous level. According to the Office for National Statistics, the county's population is now forecast to increase by 4.7% to around 339,415 between 2021 and 2043. This has changed from the forecast decrease in population set out in the previous version of this plan, although it is less than the England average which is forecast to increase by 8.3% over the same period.

However, the increase in population does not appear to be in younger age groups; the number of children and young people aged 0 to 15 living in Northumberland has been slowly but steadily declining for a significant number of years, with circa 57,500 in 2001, 55,000 in 2006 and 52,068 in 2020 (Mid-Year Population Estimates 2020). The birth rate in Northumberland has also declined slightly by about 0.1% overall between 2008 and 2019, with the County's General fertility rate (GFR) at 51.1 (per 1000 female population age 15-44) compared to 57.7 for England. However, there is variation at the school partnership level.

Exclusions in Northumberland are above the national average for both fixed term and permanent exclusions. In Northumberland, children with identified special educational needs are more likely to be excluded than their peers. This aligns with the national picture. Boys and pupils eligible for free school meals are more likely to be excluded. Within the ethnic groups, pupils from a White British background compared to their peers are more likely to be excluded.

As at September 2021, there were 163 schools, academies and free schools (not including independent schools) in Northumberland who currently educate 44,984 children and young people (October 2020 census - Nursery to Year 13); this is a fall of 1% from 45,407 recorded in January 2019 census.

Northumberland County Council has a strong model of partnerships and collaboration with

schools and academies and is committed to improving outcomes for all Northumberland children. An increasing proportion of early years' settings, primary and secondary schools are judged by OFSTED to be good or better. There has been a year on year improvement in this measure since 2016 along with overall outcomes, which are improving. This demonstrates that overall, Northumberland's education settings are providing a firm foundation for our children to be successful.

Before the pandemic (March 2020) school attendance in Northumberland was good. For at least the 3 years previous to that it had been improving and better than national and regional averages in all measures. Statistical data for the academic year 2020-21 shows that this position has temporarily changed. The challenges are around reducing persistent absence for certain pupil groups, particularly those of secondary school age, those with families affected by Covid, and children with a social worker.

County wide strategies have been introduced to support school attendance, including growth for the Education Welfare Service and an increase in high impact integrated working with Early Help. Our response to the new DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance (May 2022) and the Virtual School's new duty to promote the education of children with a social worker will continue to promote the key message that

attendance is everyone's business and that we will get back on track with consistently good school attendance by developing our multi-agency approach.

The main reason for permanent exclusions in Northumberland continues to be persistent disruptive behaviour, followed by physical assault which also mirrors the national picture. In the 2021/22 academic year to date (31st May 2022) 51 out of 75 (68%) pupils were excluded for persistent disruptive behaviour and 12 out of 75 (16%) were excluded for physical assault.

The table below shows that Permanent Exclusions (PEX) and Fixed Term Exclusions (FTEEx) reached their highest ever recorded for the academic year 2017/18. Despite a significant reduction of 28% in PEX and 26% in FTEEx by July 2019, a reduction of 43% in permanent exclusion and 49% in fixed for 2019/20, some of the reduction is down to schools

only being open to limited number of pupils during the summer term of 2020.

The downward trend continued into the Autumn term of 2020 when schools were fully open to all pupils with a reduction of over 33% in PEX and 20% reduction in FTEEx compared to the same period in 2019. However, there was an increase in FTEEx in the Summer term 2021 leading to an overall increase in FTEEx compared to the previous year.

The impact of COVID is now starting to show within Northumberland PEX and FTEEx with a new trend starting to emerge with an increase for pupils in year 7 & 8 we believe due to the time missed in years 5&6 in primary schools and the challenge with transitional arrangements being able to be implemented to prepare these year groups for secondary school.



# Exclusions in Northumberland

	Permanent Exclusions				Fixed Term Exclusions		
	Total	EHCP	SEN Support	Pupil population	Total	EHCP	SEN Support
<b>2014/15</b>	44	4	16	39,597	1599	143	355
<b>2015/16</b>	41	0	26	39,602	1270	221	704
<b>2016/17</b>	75	3	39	39,422	1967	133	767
<b>2017/18</b>	115	6	53	39,598	4514	291	1347
<b>2018/19</b>	83	4	23	39,684	3490	180	769
<b>2019/20</b>	50	0	12	39,795	1696	112	391
<b>2020/21</b>	44	0	11	40,070	2144	172	642
<b>2021/22</b>	94	1	56	40,059	4027	372	1100

## Looked After Children

There have been no permanent exclusions (PEX) of Northumberland Looked After Children since 2008. Early intervention by the Virtual School, through conversations with schools about young people in care who are at risk of exclusion, has supported this measure. Fixed term exclusions (FTEEx) of this group, however, remain a concern both nationally and locally.

In light of the statutory guidance to schools (published September 2018) on their duties to Looked After and Previously Looked After Children, schools and head teachers should also take steps to avoid the exclusion of Previously Looked after Children who have left care via adoption, Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Order.

In June 2021 the Department for Education issued non statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of children with a social worker' setting out the expectations that schools will work with the Virtual School Head teacher to reduce exclusions for children with social workers including those that have had previous social care involvement.

## Reducing Exclusion

The multi-agency consultations that informed the development of this strategy identified that:

- Promoting inclusion and preventing and reducing exclusion is everybody's responsibility and requires a robust multi-agency approach.
- Activity to promote inclusion and reduce exclusion should be embedded into all work with children, young people and families
- Schools and education settings want advice, resources and training to support best practice.

This strategy outlines the different strands of proactive work to prevent exclusion and secure best outcomes for all young people which is already underway and the further developments to be undertaken within:

- 1 Mainstream Offer**
- 2 Fair Access and Inclusion**
- 3 Ensuring Best Practice**
- 4 Specialist Settings**

Early years' settings, schools, Post 16 providers, and services should use this strategy to inform their policies, practice and multi-agency planning in their work to ensure good outcomes for our children and young people ensuring that promoting inclusion and preventing exclusion really is everybody's business in Northumberland.



# Mainstream Offer

The Mainstream offer consists of school-based interventions and support that demonstrates a consistently applied graduated response to all pupils needs. **Whole School Vision and Ethos for all Northumberland schools and education settings.**

Schools are the key universal children's service, which children and young people experience, and can positively influence their lives and emotional well-being. A positive ethos, the quality of the curriculum, the organisation, and engaging delivery of teaching and learning all contribute to school being a safe and secure environment, and a place where children want to be. Building strong relationships with parents and carers and engaging them in their child's education will also help secure good attendance and enable children to achieve good outcomes.

Providing children with the opportunity to develop positive social and emotional skills and resilience is crucial in addressing individual needs and achieving positive outcomes. Research increasingly demonstrates that positive emotional health and well-being are key factors in affecting social development, school attendance, and educational attainment. Regular attendance at school and then in Post 16 education and training makes a critical contribution to safeguarding children and securing good outcomes. We want our schools and education settings to promote a culture of positive relationships and good attendance and to work in close partnership with children and young people, their families, Children's Services, and other agencies to identify and respond to any additional needs which could, if left unaddressed lead to a risk of exclusion.

## School and Education settings Leadership

School Leadership Teams ensure that schools adopt and consistently implement inclusive, whole school policies and practices that support good attendance. The prevention of exclusion is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the Governing Body, with the approach supported by the Leadership Team and the whole school body. The same principles apply to senior leaders in Early Years' and Post 16 settings.

Additional information and links to relevant policies can be found in our School Exclusion Handbook ([handbook](#))



# Early Intervention, Identification and prevention

## Preventative Education Services

### Northumberland Inclusive Education Services

The core purpose of the Inclusive Education Support Service in Northumberland is to support and enable schools to identify special educational and additional needs, and to set up and orchestrate effective provision for the learners in their school communities, thereby improving outcomes for learners as they move through school and prepare for adult life.

Northumberland County Council provides Support Services for schools in the following areas:

- Autism
- Educational Psychology
- Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour
- English as an Additional Language
- Specific Learning Difficulties
- Hearing, Vision and Multisensory Impairment
- Speech, Language and Communication

Since September 2020, the services have delivered a core offer free at the point of delivery. This applies to all Northumberland schools (maintained and academies).

Specialist staff provide advice for schools on meeting pupils needs within the context of the classroom, working with school staff to develop and implement successful strategies for inclusion and a conducive learning environment for those who experience barriers.

### Inclusion Service

The main responsibility of the Inclusion Team is to fulfil the local authority's statutory duties regarding permanently excluded learners. Recently the team has expanded, enabling a more preventative focus. Schools and Academies can access free support, advice and guidance to schools and academies in relation to young people 'at risk' of exclusion. Colleagues within the team have a wealth of experience working with young people whose barriers to learning include:

- Emerging social, emotional and mental health issues
- Transition
- Disruptive behaviour that may result in exclusion
- Challenging family circumstances

The work of the team varies and the intervention is bespoke to each child, depending on their specific

challenges and barriers. It can range from 1:1 sessional work in school to support with signposting or implementing the graduated approach. The team also offers support to schools in relation to brokering alternative provision places, if this is identified as a suitable pathway.

For information about how the Inclusion Team and the Inclusive Education Services fits into the continuum of school-based intervention, please refer to the ladder of support within the School Exclusion Handbook. ([ladder of support](#))

### Early Help

Northumberland County Council offers a comprehensive free Early Help training offer, which is open to all partners including education staff. This includes a range of topics to support multi-agency staff working with children and families including working with children with emotional health needs, specific neurodevelopmental conditions and SEND. This training helps support staff to identify children early and to understand the early help framework available in Northumberland to support children and families. Building on the range of early help services available across the partnership, work is ongoing to develop the Family Hub model; this will create locality-based family hubs for families of children 0-19 with a range of multi-agency partners co-located and co-delivering services. Part of the offer around these Hubs will be the refreshed Prevention and Intervention pathway, which aims to provide support for families of young children and aid early identification of needs.

As part of our multi agency First contact team and MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), the Early Help First Contact team acts as a single point of access for all professionals who feel that a child or young person needs additional support through the Early Help Support Request process.

The Early Help First Contact team use the graduated approach for both SEND and emotional and mental health support. The Early Help Support request process aims to ensure that the right service is identified at the right time. Any member of staff working in an education setting can refer to the team with the families' consent. For a small number of children where needs continue to be unresolved, a virtual multi-agency hub meeting chaired by a senior manager provides a framework for identifying a plan and next steps for the relevant child.

# EARLY HELP PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PATHWAY

Refer to one group and the service will assess suitability.  
During assessment, the service will align age ranges and needs to gain the most from the group offer.

click here to complete a request form

**Best Start in Life**

**Supporting Families**

May be identified for Targeted Intervention through:

- EHA
- Intensive Professional/Agency Involvement
- Early Help Family Worker
- Statutory Social Work

click here

click here



## Prevention Groups (Conception - 2+ Years)

**Brilliant Babies**  
Conception - 6 months  
Bonding and attachment  
Communication  
Health and wellbeing  
Safety  
Physical and emotional development  
Play and learning

**Early Explorers**  
6-18 months  
Communication  
Health and wellbeing  
Safety  
Physical and emotional development  
Play and learning

**LTTP (AND)**  
(Additional Needs and Disabilities) 0-5 years  
Communication  
Health and wellbeing  
Safety  
Physical and emotional development  
Play and learning  
Information, advice and guidance

**Tiny Talkers**  
1-2+ Years  
Communication and language development  
Tips and techniques for developing communication through play

## Intervention Groups (Conception - 19 Years)

**HENRY**  
Families in the Making (Antenatal)  
Health Families: Right from the Start (0-5 Years)  
Healthy Families: Growing Up (4-12 Years)

**Incredible Years**  
Incredible Years Babies (0-1 Year)  
Incredible Years Toddler (1-3 Years)  
Incredible Years Pre-School (3-6 Years)

**Healthier Relationships**  
Hope 2 Recovery (Female 16+)  
Recovery Toolkit (Women 16+ & Children 8+)  
Me, You and Baby Too Antenatal and new parents  
Arguing Better  
Parents experiencing high levels of stress and couple conflict  
Getting it right for Children Separated or separating parents experiencing high levels of conflict

**5+ Groupwork**  
Groups for all age ranges are not always available: the Locality Teams will advise  
Groups to support concerns such as behaviour, confidence, self-esteem, risk-taking and exam stress  
Children and Young People (Over 5 Years)  
Parents and Carers (of 5-19 Years)

Universal Drop-In  
Learning Together Through Play (0-5 Years)



## Early Help Support Around the School/Child

Northumberland's Early Help Assessment is a universal tool that can be used by any service to help to understand more complex situations and to co-ordinate a support plan for children and young people. Each of the four localities in Northumberland has a team of Early Help Family Workers who support children and families who require intensive family support at an early help level with a range of complex needs. These teams work closely with staff in schools as part of the Team Around the Family model and some schools have identified link workers from these teams. Northumberland County Council and partners are developing its multi-agency Team Around the School TAS (offer) and an Early Help Clinic offer is in place in a number of schools, which will be rolled out to more schools in the coming years. In addition, a new team of Early Help Education Workers is being developed; each worker will be allocated a number of schools and will work with them to have oversight of the pastoral and EH offer within school. These workers will also support the initiation of Early Help Assessments and support the team around the family process where the school is the lead professional.

The Council has used NHS England Trailblazer funding to put in place Education Mental Health Practitioners linked to schools in Hexham and Blyth and is now rolling this model out to schools in Ashington and Bedlington. The funding has also provided for additional training for schools in relation to emotional wellbeing including accredited tools.

Young people coming into contact with the police have benefitted from the roll-out of an enhanced preventative model based around an out of court disposal panel and proportionate use of Outcome 22 by the police as an alternative to criminalisation. This has reduced the first time entrant rate in Northumberland and provided a more holistic plan including supporting children's education outcomes. This is enhanced by mental health practitioners and a speech and language therapist providing input to support identification of any unmet health needs.

## Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) Learners at risk of Permanent Exclusion

The approach taken in Northumberland for learners with EHCPs is one of early intervention. Permanent exclusion of a learner with high levels of additional need is extremely detrimental to their wellbeing and progress towards their identified outcomes.

Schools making provision for learners with EHCPs are encouraged and supported to notify local authority teams (SEN Monitoring and Assessment Team and specialist support teams) as soon as possible if for any reason they are having difficulty ensuring that a child or young person is engaged in learning and making progress.

Tracking processes within the local authority enables regular monthly monitoring of all pupils with SEN who have received fixed term exclusions. Multi-agency approaches are taken, ensuring that where there are repeating patterns of fixed term exclusions, these are identified and appropriate support offered to schools. For pupils with EHCPs this involves contact being made with the school to discuss the consistency of provision available, the possibility of additional needs emerging, and exploration of other services that may be able to offer support and advice.

In line with the statutory processes, where it appears that a placement is at risk of breakdown, an early Annual Review will be called by the school so that amendments to the EHCP provision (Section F), levels of funding required or changes of placement can be discussed. With parental consent, other schools and settings are approached and placements agreed so that permanent exclusion can be avoided.

### We will:

- Support all Northumberland schools and settings to ensure they are inclusive with the aim to meet the needs of all pupils in their communities;
- Provide targeted and whole school support through our multi agency offer;
- Support Head teachers, governors and staff with learning and development opportunities specifically related to inclusion which will ensure a graduated response is consistently applied to meet all learners needs.



# Fair Access and Inclusion



## Fair Access Protocol

Every Local Authority must have a Fair Access Protocol, agreed with the majority of its schools and academies and which is legally binding. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure better education outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

From a school's perspective, the purpose of this protocol is to establish a fair and transparent system, which ensures that all the schools/academies share the responsibility to support children with challenging behaviour and educational needs when required.

From a pupil's perspective the purpose of the protocol is to ensure that access to mainstream education is secured quickly with the appropriate support.

The protocol will play a key role in helping to keep children safe and to achieve their potential. There is a particular focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with difficult and challenging behaviour who seek admission to a mainstream school/academy, either following a permanent exclusion or to pre-empt such an exclusion, or who are otherwise not on a school roll.

Our approach reflects a shared commitment to working in partnership to minimise the use of exclusion (fixed-term and permanent). Schools/academies, the local authority and other services will focus their efforts on early intervention and support for children experiencing difficulties in order to avoid the need for exclusion and/or school transfer.

The current Protocol has been developed in consultation with colleagues via the multi-agency exclusion task and finish group; [Fair Access Protocol](#)

## Managed Moves

Managed moves have been advocated nationally as an alternative to permanent exclusion from school for many years. The current DfE guidance 'Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units (2017) confirms that 'a pupil can transfer to another school as part of a managed move where this occurs with the consent of all parties involved, including the parents'.

Managed moves involve the young person moving on to a new placement in a planned manner. A change of school can be particularly valuable if it is perceived that a pupil's difficulties are the result of inappropriate peer relationships or if the relationship of trust between parent and school has broken down.

Although schools, parents and pupils have used the idea of a "fresh start" in a new school as an alternative to permanent exclusion for a number of years, experience suggests that when these moves are arranged between the schools themselves (usually at head teacher level) and when they are carefully managed, they have more chance of achieving a successful outcome for the pupil than when the parents attempt to identify an alternative school for their child and to make the transfer arrangements themselves.

In a managed move, the focus is on finding a way forward in response to the pupil's current difficulties – and so the process is a solution-orientated rather than punitive one. However, 'managed moves' should only be considered when a range of other strategies for managing the pupil in the original school have been tried without success.

For students with EHC Plans, any change of school needs to be through the related review processes and must involve the SEND Team.

N.B. A managed move should only be used when a young person is genuinely at risk of exclusion and not as part of general admission procedures.

[Managed Move Protocol](#)

## Off-site Direction

Off-site direction is when a governing board of a maintained school requires a pupil to attend another education setting to improve their behaviour. Whilst

the legislation does not apply to academies, they can arrange off-site provision for such purposes under their general powers. Where interventions or targeted support have not been successful in improving a pupil's behaviour, off-site direction should be used to arrange time-limited placements at an AP or another mainstream school. During the off-site direction to another school, pupils must be dual registered. Code B should be used for any off-site educational activity, if the provision is an approved educational activity that does not involve the pupil being registered at any other school.

When possible, in-school interventions or targeted support from AP schools should be used to meet a pupil's individual needs and circumstances – whether behavioural or special educational.

Depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the pupil, off-site direction into AP can be full-time or a combination of part-time support in AP and continued mainstream education. A proposed maximum period of time should be discussed and agreed upon as part of the planning phase for an off-site direction. As part of planning, alternative options should be considered once the time limit has been reached, including a managed move on a permanent basis (if a pupil is in a mainstream school) upon review of the time-limited placement.



The governing board must comply with the Education (Educational Provision for Improving Behaviour) Regulations 2010 and must show regard to the Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities, headteachers and governing bodies. Whilst the alternative provision guidance section does legally apply to maintained schools, academy trusts are also encouraged to follow this guidance.

The statutory guidance covers objectives and timeframes with appropriate monitoring of progress. For maintained schools, the governing board must ensure that parents (or the pupil if 18 or older) (and the local authority if the pupil has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan) are notified in writing and provided with information about the placement as soon as practicable after the direction has been made and no later than two school days before the relevant day.

Parents (or pupils aged 18 or over) and, where the pupil has an EHC plan, the local authority can request, in writing, that the governing board hold a review meeting. When this happens, governing boards must comply with the request as soon as reasonably practicable, unless there has already been a review meeting in the previous 10 weeks.

The length of time a pupil spends in another mainstream school or AP and the reintegration plan must be kept under review by the governing body, who must hold review meetings at such intervals as they, having regard to the needs of the pupil, consider appropriate, for as long as the requirement remains in effect. Not later than six days before the date of any review meeting, a governing body must give a written invitation to parents (or the pupil if 18 or older) (and the local authority if the pupil has an EHC plan) to attend the review meeting, or to submit in writing before the date of the meeting their views as to whether off-site direction should continue to have effect. The governing body must ensure, insofar as is practicable, that any review meeting is convened on a date, and at a time, that is suitable for the parent.

The governing body must keep the placement under review for as long as the requirement remains in effect and must decide following each review meeting as to whether the requirement should continue to have effect and, if so, for what period of time. The meeting should include arrangements for reviews, including how often the placement will be reviewed, when the first review will be and who should be involved in the reviews.

For example, review meetings should take place between the school, parents, the pupil, and other agencies e.g., a pupil's social worker, Child and

Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) and Youth Justice Teams, and the local authority (if a pupil has an EHC plan) to establish agreed monitoring points to discuss the pupil's ongoing behaviour. These reviews should be recorded in writing and be frequent enough to provide assurance that the off-site direction is achieving its objectives via monitoring points.

The governing body must give written notification of their decision as to whether the requirement to continue the placement should continue and if so, for what period of time including the reasons for it to the parent no later than six days after the date of the review meeting.

To support a pupil with reintegration into their referring school, the focus of intervention whilst off-site should remain on ensuring that a pupil continues to receive a broad and balanced curriculum whilst any inappropriate behaviours which require intervention are being addressed. If a pupil with a disability or SEN has been moved off-site, the duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 continue to apply (for example, to make reasonable adjustments or to put support in place to meet SEN).

The length of time a pupil spends in another mainstream school or AP will depend on what best supports the pupil's needs and potential improvement in behaviour.

## Inclusion Panel

The local authority has a legal obligation to arrange suitable full-time education for children and young people who are permanently excluded. The local authority can meet these obligations through a variety of pathways including commissioning places at the PRU or alternative provision. In order to ensure the most appropriate educational provision suitable to meet the needs of those pupils at risk of permanent exclusion or those that have been excluded, a multi-agency Inclusion panel will come into operation from September 2022:

- to provide a clear and transparent admission process that is understood by service users (pupils), their parents/ carers, schools/academies and staff;
- to ensure that children and young people are placed in the most appropriate educational provision suitable to their needs.

The Inclusion Panel has been developed to decide on the most appropriate educational placements for those children and young people who:

- have been permanently excluded
- are at risk of permanent exclusion

The Inclusion Panel will also review pupils who are in receipt of education provided via alternative education or the PRU on a regular basis. In the first instance this will be done via the Inclusion Support Officers, who will act as the champion of the child and represent their views and feelings. All children and young people who are placed via the Inclusion Panel must have an exit route identified which might include:

- Post 16 progression plan
- Return to mainstream via the fair access process
- EHCP (with a view to moving out of the PRU/AP)

The panel membership will be made up of representatives from the Education Inclusion Team, SEND, Early Help, Mental Health, Health, Virtual School, Headteacher of PRU and social care.

The local authority fully recognises that prevention and intervention deliver the best outcomes for those children at risk of permanent exclusion, so in order to support the work of the panel, funding will be set aside on an annual basis to provide additional support to schools to prevent permanent exclusion. [Inclusion Panel Protocol](#)

### We will:

- Ensure all children and young people have access to the most suitable education setting to meet their needs in order that they achieve their potential;
- Ensure that Northumberland's Fair Access Protocol (FAP) is maintained and applied to support vulnerable young people into an appropriate new school as soon as possible;
- Have overall focus is on destinations as we strive to offer inclusive educational pathways that recognises the voice of learners in order for them to fulfil their potential.

# Ensuring Best Practice in Use of Exclusions



## The Use of Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions – Northumberland’s Ambition

Currently in Northumberland, the main reason for suspensions and permanent exclusions is persistent disruptive behaviour. There is a strong expectation that through the implementation of this strategy, the trend will change and the main reason for both suspensions and permanent exclusions of pupils from Northumberland Schools will be in relation to more serious incidents that have caused risk of harm to others and where allowing the pupils to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupils or others in the school.

This strategy aims to reduce the use of suspensions and permanent exclusions for incidents of persistent disruptive behaviour by ensuring that the root causes of such emerging behaviours are understood and appropriately addressed as early as possible through early intervention and innovative multi-agency planning.

As stated in the DfE Statutory Guidance, *“the decision to exclude a pupil must be lawful, reasonable and fair. Schools have a statutory duty not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as disability or race. Schools should give particular consideration to*

*the fair treatment of pupils from groups who are vulnerable to exclusion. Disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs. Where a school has concerns about a pupil’s behaviour, it should try to identify whether there are any causal factors and intervene early in order to reduce the need for a subsequent exclusion. In this situation, schools should consider whether a multi-agency assessment that goes beyond the pupil’s educational needs is required.”*

Page 6 - Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England September 2022

Exclusions – ensuring legal processes are followed. Where an exclusion is to be used, it is essential that the legally required processes are followed.

Northumberland County Council will issue written guidance providing Head Teachers, Principals, Heads of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Governors/trustees with a comprehensive guide in processing and recording a permanent exclusion.



## DfE Guidance

All decisions about fixed and permanent exclusions need to be made in reference to the statutory DfE guidance - Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement, Guidance for maintained schools, academies, and pupil referral units in England September 2022.

It is important to refer to the guidance when considering an exclusion and to ensure that all processes and procedures carried out are compliant with the guidance. The guidance provides an overview to the legislation on exclusions and how to ensure that practices/processes are compliant. Supporting young people who have been permanently excluded into a new school place:

For young people who need to return to mainstream schools following a permanent exclusion an appropriate school place is identified through Northumberland's agreed Fair Access Protocols (FAP). Once a new school place has been agreed, timescales are set for the young person to be admitted to the school along with an agreed plan for how any necessary support will be provided to the young person.



## Support for young people who have been permanently excluded

Every Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide full time, suitable education for permanently excluded learners.

In Northumberland, learners are assigned a Key Worker from the Inclusion Team, who will track and monitor their progress.

Alternative provision settings are expected to identify any gaps in learning or development by using our 'screening tool'. This will enable them to offer appropriate intervention and seek support from appropriate agencies if necessary.

The goal is to identify a pathway back into mainstream education via the FAP or into a specialist setting if required. For young people in Key Stage 4 there will also be support provided to identify a Post 16 pathway:

### Support into employment, training, and further education

The careers guidance team provides information advice and guidance (IAG) to young people in Year 11 who are considered to be at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) which aims to help them with next steps. This includes those who are permanently excluded.

Working closely with the local authority's Education Welfare team, EOTAS provision and the Alternative Providers (APs) in the county, the Careers Guidance Team (CGT) currently offers all excluded young people in Year 11 an Individual Vocational Guidance Interview (VGI) with a qualified and impartial Careers Adviser (CAV). The young person then receives an individually tailored Careers Action Plan (CAP) based on their interview.

Following the individual VGI and based on the content of the CAP the young person has the opportunity to attend one or more group sessions for detailed support on how to complete college, training provider, and apprenticeship applications. These sessions usually take place in the local community with a Careers Assistant but may take place at the APs premises if this is appropriate. Where the young person is unable (or unwilling) to attend in person, if further support with applications is required this may be offered via a telephone or Teams call or by email.

The aspiration is to develop the offer so that an earlier relationship with the young person can be built up through an informal introductory session in the summer term of Year 10 with the CAV, dependent on when the PEx occurred.

#### We will:

- Work with Head teachers and Governors to ensure that statutory exclusions guidance is being followed and all exclusions are compliant with legislation;
- Offer all Governing Bodies access to exclusion training with regards to their role in reviewing exclusions;
- Monitor the use of permanent exclusion in each school and where there is high and/or increasing rate of exclusion we will invite schools in to discuss the reasons for exclusions and preventative measures being put in place;
- Work with Post 16 providers to identify and disseminate best practice in the prevention of exclusion. NB: Young people are excluded from Post 16 provisions. Post 16 policy and practice is determined by each individual Post 16 setting as there is no national Post 16 exclusions guidance or reporting on exclusion for this age group.

# Specialist settings



## Alternative Provision

Alternative Provision (AP) is for children of compulsory school age who do not attend mainstream or special schools and who would be at risk of not receiving suitable education, for any reason. Every child is entitled to an education that enables them to fulfil their potential, whatever their background, needs or location in the country. High quality Alternative Provision that is appropriate to the particular needs of a young person can play a critical role in making this happen. It can provide support to young people at challenging moments in their lives and each placement has the potential to transform a young person's life chances.

In light of the green paper (May 2022), Northumberland County Council will review its current provision of Alternative Providers and contracting arrangements to ensure the recommendations and new guidance is fully implemented across the county.

Local Authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for permanently excluded children and for other children who through illness or other reasons would not receive suitable education, without such arrangements being made. Where a child has been subject to a fixed-period exclusion of more than five school days, schools must arrange Alternative Provision.

Young people can require Alternative Provision for a wide range of reasons, including:

- as an intervention for children who, for a number of reasons are struggling to manage in mainstream schooling;

- behaviour which has resulted in the school implementing a permanent or fixed-period exclusion, or an off-site direction;
- health reasons – including physical or mental health needs; and
- where a child is awaiting placement in a specialist school.

The first objective of these places is to gain, over a relatively short period of time, a fuller understanding of the young person's needs and the type of support they need to make good progress and achieve well.

Where assessments show it is appropriate for the young person to return to their mainstream school, school staff should work closely with the Alternative Provision to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and understanding of how to provide the appropriate type of support ready for the young person's return. Alternatively, assessments may indicate that it is not appropriate for a young person to remain in a mainstream school as their needs will be most effectively met in a smaller specialist school. A special school place can only be secured where an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is in place.

Support is also available from the new Early Help Education Support Team who will have one worker dedicated to working with Special Schools and Alternative Providers – the pupils in alternative provisions have differing needs to those in mainstream schools and by having a dedicated worker they will develop specialisms in the needs



## Provision mapping “Ensuring the right places are available at the right time in the right place”

(page 33): [Alternative Provision Market Analysis](#)

### Challenges

Serving the needs of Northumberland children and young people as close to their home communities as possible brings challenges due to the rural nature of the vast majority of the County. In order to meet this challenge, we need to ensure we have Alternative Provision available across the whole of Northumberland. The map below shows the locations of the current AP providers, with the vast

majority being located in the South East of the county which again is in line with where the vast majority of the population of Northumberland reside and where there is the greatest demand for alternative provision placements both for preventive work and those that have been permanently excluded from school.

## Alternative Provision commissioning arrangement and Quality Monitoring

We have created a mechanism to purchase placements from the private sector and to monitor their quality. A tender exercise was undertaken in the autumn of 2019 that created a framework to replace an earlier version. The framework has been established for a 3-year term covering 6/1/20 to 5/1/23 with the option to extend for a further 2 x 12-month periods, although any extension used will be timed to align with the academic year. It was created on a non-exclusive basis, meaning that providers are not guaranteed a minimum volume of business and the Council is not required to be the provider's only source of business. It was structured in this way to facilitate the intended reduction in the Council's need to purchase placements for PEX children in favour of a more proactive approach by schools, whereby preventative placements and/or support are purchased.

### Current Framework

Whilst not exhaustive, the framework specifies that Alternative Provision must:

- Focus on developing literacy and numeracy or mathematics and English;
- Provide mentoring support to re-engage pupils back into school and build emotional and social resilience;
- Provide age-appropriate learning and where necessary one to one support;
- Operate in line with school term dates and have high expectations of behaviour and discipline;
- Provide vocational opportunities as appropriate for students aged 14 and over;
- Provide frequent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;

- Provide students with strategies to try and address their behaviour/motivation and cope with the demands of mainstream school or college;
- Establish appropriately high standards and expectations with students to support reintegration to school e.g., attendance, punctuality, behaviour, dress code, respect for adults, use of language;
- Have the ability to assess individual support needs and refer students for specialist support.

Further details on all Northumberland County Council alternative provision providers, including their outcomes data, is contained in the [Alternative Provision Catalogue](#).





## Monitoring and Governance

Contract monitoring comprises Quarterly Contract Management meetings, which are held with each provider (framework and non-framework) and the Head of School Organisation and Resources together with the Senior Manager, Commissioning. To provide a more structured basis for this conversation a Performance Dashboard has been developed.

Annual Contract Monitoring Visits are held with each provider in which a Quality Monitoring report is completed with an Action Plan as appropriate. From a commissioning perspective, this covers safe recruitment, premises and insurance, risk assessments, policies and procedures etc. This process is supported by an assessment from a School Improvement Partner, which follows the format for support offered to Northumberland's maintained schools.

This monitoring process was designed to provide the Council with a level of assurance regarding the overarching quality of the provision. However it is not intended to monitor the performance and wellbeing of the individual child in placement. In the case of permanently excluded children, this remains the responsibility of the specialist team within the Council who also regularly engage with providers via Provider Engagement Events to share good practice and drive up the quality of delivery.

Although Ofsted guidance makes it clear that schools cannot rely on the due diligence undertaken by the Council when commissioning placements, a catalogue is being produced detailing the service offer of each provider together with details of the outcomes achieved. This is intended to support schools in identifying appropriate provision and understanding the market by sharing intelligence.

Decisions regarding the future and nature of the contract are overseen by the Exclusion Task and Finish Project Board.



Whilst it is our aim to see a reduction in the number of children that are permanently excluded within Northumberland this is in part reliant upon schools proactively commissioning support for pupils via preventative programmes. It follows that the balance between the number of Council commissioned placements and school commissioned placements will alter over time. As both are reliant upon good quality, sustainable provision the work undertaken with providers supports that agenda with an increasing focus on reintegration, meaningful outcomes and support in preparing for post 16 education.

## Monitoring attendance, progress and outcomes of young people in AP

The Education Welfare service monitors attendance at 19 Alternative Providers:

- Engage – 5 sites
- Educla – 2 sites
- Headstart – 3 sites
- Other 9

The service provided by Education Welfare involves:

- Oversight from a named Lead Education Welfare Officer;
- Weekly check of the compliance declaration to ensure that all providers are operating within the DfE guidance for the Registration of Independent Schools (August 2019);
- Fortnightly data meetings with each provider (on each separate site) to ensure that all children missing education and at risk of missing education are identified. This data is monitored by the multi-agency CME (children missing education) tracking pane;
- Monthly review of CME returns, triangulated with provider registers, to identify children whose attendance is causing concern.

For children who are permanently excluded from school, the Inclusion Team allocates the placement in alternative provision and supports the child for a period of induction. A timetable with notice of arrangement and certificate of service is prepared and sent to parents. At the same time the Lead Education Welfare Officer with oversight of attendance in alternative provision starts gathering and recording attendance data.

If and when the attendance of individual children deteriorates, providers start their attendance procedure by contacting parents, professionals and sending standard letters home. If attendance does not improve, then providers either make a referral to Education Welfare or, in exceptional circumstances, involve the Inclusion Team if the placement is not working.

Actions to improve attendance include home visits, referrals to other agencies if appropriate and meetings in school. Intensive one to one support from Education Welfare Support Officers is offered on an individual needs basis.

The Education Welfare service encourages alternative providers to take a firm position to enforce attendance. The service is currently monitoring 95 students and have 17 open referrals. Of the 17 referrals, 2 have been issued with a Penalty Notice and a further 5 Formal Warnings have been issued.

Average overall attendance is 71.51%. The latest national average from the DfE (March 2022) cites attendance in state-funded alternative provision at 58.8%.

Academic progress and education outcomes for children placed in alternative provision are monitored by the Inclusion Team for permanently excluded pupils, and by schools that have commissioned places in alternative provision for children who remain on their school roll. An alternative provision Catalogue is published on an annual basis that sets out the provider used in the previous year and the educational outcomes together with destination data for each providers cohort of pupils in order to support schools making an informed choice on which AP provider to meet the needs of their children and young people.

# Developing further SEMH Provision in Northumberland

Leaders from all education sectors have for some time been highlighting the challenges within many settings in ensuring appropriate provision for learners with SEMH. Although Northumberland County Council has much strength within this area, capacity is not always available where it is needed and the capacity which does exist is not always coordinated. Early years settings, all mainstream schools, special schools, alternative providers, health providers and central LA teams have key roles to play and responsibilities to meet in this area.

To meet the needs of SEMH learners as close to home as possible...

## **The Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) at Hepscott Park will -**

Progress over the 22/23 academic year to take KS3 and 4 learners only. Permanently excluded pupils in KS3/4 will be admitted automatically. Other learners will be admitted via the Inclusion Panel. Where possible placements will be short term, around 20 weeks. Planned exit routes must be highlighted on entry including return to the current school, a managed move to another mainstream school, a placement at a special school in Northumberland or a placement at an AP Provision.

A significant amount of work will be required to ensure a smooth transition into and out of the PRU placement. Prior to admittance to the PRU schools will need to prove appropriate approaches to the graduate approach, use of external SEND support services and other supportive practices. This should be highlighted to the admission panel by a 'champion of the child'.

During this time period the PRU should also be renamed and possibly relocated. Inclusive Education Services will need to be free at the point of need for this cohort of pupils. The new central PRU should look to collocate some services.

## **Primary Support Base (PSB) nurture provisions will be developed -**

There is a growing demand for SEMH provision in under 11's across Northumberland. In some areas the demand is driven by higher overall numbers and in other localities numbers are smaller, but levels of complexity are growing. Traditionally mainstream primary provision is strong in this area as most schools are exceptionally inclusive. The Primary Support Base concept is designed to consolidate and grow the existing expertise and allow that resource to be shared across partnerships for the benefit of all learners.







Possible designs for the Support Bases are varied and should be flexible to meet local needs and demand. However, those selected as Local Authority supported provisions will share the following principles:

- Working towards the goal of fulltime mainstream provision
- Inclusion for all and a 'fresh start every day'
- Welcoming and supportive working with parents and carers
- Flexibility in placement types and timescales
- One model for admissions
- One model for pricing
- Use of the Inclusion Passport, including the planned exit routes from the base
- A planned maximum placement length of 2 terms
- Open to excluded learners where appropriate
- Regular quality assurance and sharing best practice across partnerships

#### **We will:**

- Develop an alternative education model which offers routes for children which support their future career choice.
- Work with our existing high quality Alternative Providers, schools and academies to develop registered full time provision.
- Continue to build capacity in all partnerships to ensure the educational needs of children and young people are met as close to home as possible.
- Always have the child at the centre of every decision, and we will ensure that our most vulnerable learners have access to high quality education and ambitious pathways.



## **Contact Us**

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**APPENDIX 2****Northumberland Permanent Exclusions by School**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total in 4 years
Ashington Academy	10	5	5	17	37
Astley Community High School	1	3	1	3	8
Beaconhill Community Primary School	1				1
Bede Academy	5	2	3	6	16
Bedlington Academy	12	14	10	19	55
Berwick Academy	11	5	2	5	23
Berwick Middle School	1	1			2
Cramlington Learning Village				1	1
Cramlington Village Primary School	1				1
Croftway Academy		1			1
Eastlea Primary School	1				1
Ellington Primary School	1				1
Greenhead C of E Primary School				1	1
Haydon Bridge High School	2		1	1	4
James Calvert Spence College	2	2	3	1	8
Morpeth Chantry Middle School			1		1
Morpeth Newminster Middle School		1			1
Morpeth Road Academy		2			2
NCEA Bishop's Primary School	1				1
NCEA Duke's Secondary School	7	7	8	10	32
Ponteland High School			1	1	2
Prudhoe Community High School	2		1	2	5
Queen Elizabeth High School	1	1	1		3
Seaton Sluice Middle School	1	1			2
St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy	6		3	11	20
The Blyth Academy	9	1	2	10	22
The Duchess's Community High School	5	3	2	5	15
The King Edward VI School	2			1	3
Tweedmouth Community Middle School	1				1
Total	83	49	44	94	

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## Northumberland County Council

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

**6<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

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#### **Post Cabinet Decision Update: RDA Relocation from Tranwell (Pegasus Centre) to Kirkley Hall Campus (Northumberland College)**

Report of: Audrey Kingham, Service Director Education and Joint Interim Director of Children's Services

Cabinet Member: Guy Renner Thompson – Portfolio holder for Children's Services.

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#### **Purpose of Report**

During the Cabinet meeting of Northumberland County Council held Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 the recommendations set out below were approved unanimously by the Leader and Members.

This report sets out the progress made in preparing to deliver the capital project since approval being granted 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

#### **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended:

1. To review and acknowledge progress to date in delivering the transition of the RDA and capital project to prepare Kirkley Hall equestrian area in readiness to continue the function of Morpeth Group RDA at Kirkley Hall.

#### **Links to Corporate Plan**

The proposal to support relocation of the Morpeth Group RDA is in strong accordance with the **Living & Learning, Enjoying & Connecting** and **How** priorities of NCC Corporate Plan 2021-24 as well as the overarching theme '**Tackling inequalities within our communities, supporting our residents to be healthier and happier**'.

## Key Issues

1. Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland have been supporting the operation of the Morpeth Group RDA for several years. This support has been predominantly via funding the lease, staff and non-staff costs as well as providing Active Northumberland staff resource to operate the service and associated back-office functions.
2. The RDA has also diminished in its capacity to deliver disabled riding therapy owing to inability to make medium to long term development plans under the operation of Active Northumberland.
3. NCC, Active Northumberland and the RDA have explored potential for a more sustainable future arrangement for the RDA including delivering savings for Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland whilst sustaining the social value that Morpeth Group RDA deliver and unlocking potential for growth.
4. Northumberland College declared strong interest in accommodating the RDA on a cost-free basis, acknowledging they would need to increase staffing levels to cover equine care and delivery of disabled riding sessions as well as cover consumable costs. College would retain all proceeds from disabled riding sessions to cover these staffing costs and consumable costs as well as receiving a small grant funded contribution from the RDA, a similar model to that between RDA and Active Northumberland. College infrastructure and facilities will offer significant efficiency advantages however given the historic finance data of the RDA and Active Northumberland, and acknowledging high costs of equine care, it is assumed the RDA operation will never be profit making and is likely to be loss making initially. Northumberland College are comfortable with this non-profit arrangement based upon the delivery of social value and their wider SEND strategy.
5. Northumberland College have been developing a working relationship with the RDA directly, working toward a break even operating model, allowing NCC and Active to move away from the arrangement following facilitating transition, however on that basis College would not contribute to any capital investment to prepare the site.
6. For one off capital investment of circa **£171,366** Kirkley Hall equine site can be upgraded to accept the RDA to a specification suitable for the delivery of disabled riding.
7. Capacity to fund the **£171,366** has been identified in the 'Contingency for Grant Funded Projects' 21/22' which is included in the current Capital MTFP.
8. Morpeth Group RDA are very supportive of this proposal.

## **Background**

### **Progress made with relocation and capital works between Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March Cabinet meeting and September 2022.**

#### **8<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

During the Cabinet meeting of Northumberland County Council held Tuesday 8th March 2022 the following recommendations were approved unanimously by the Leader and Members:

1. To agree a capital project to value of **£171,366** to prepare Kirkley Hall equestrian area in readiness to accept Morpeth Group RDA as a base for their ongoing operation, providing sustainability to the RDA operation.
2. To approve this funding from surplus within the 'Contingency for Grant Funded Projects' 21/22' which forms part of the Capital Medium Term Financial Plan.

#### **March 2022**

- During March 2022 Cabinet approval was granted to proceed with the capital project which would allow transfer of Morpeth Group RDA from Tranwell to a more sustainable future at Kirkley Hall. College were informed shortly after and NCC and College agreed that the works should be managed and delivered by NCC.
- Site meetings at Kirkley Hall took place, NCC instruct College to issue a works license and works commissioning proceeds with Property Services including the appointment of an NCC project manager.
- NCC, RDA and College meet at Kirkley Hall to commence more formal planning and contractual arrangements.
- College indicate they will use their own staff resource to run the RDA operation - Active Northumberland and NCC HR suggest existing Active staff would need to be offered a settlement package and that NCC & Active were prepared to proceed in this way.

#### **April 2022**

- Site survey visits by NCC undertaken and preparation of design consultant tender package.
- First draft of contract between College and RDA is completed for review.
- NCC advises college that it should be aware that College will be responsible for TUPE liabilities following transfer of service.
- College are unable to decide best way forward and senior intervention by NCC and Active is required owing to lease expiring imminently.
- Decision reached that TUPE transferring Active staff to college is the Colleges preferred way forward.
- Active staff are notified of TUPE transfer arrangements.
- NCC notify the landlord of Pegasus Centre that NCC will not be extending the lease and intend to vacate site by 11th May.

## **May 2022**

- NCC publishes and concludes tender for design works – Crawford Higgins are appointed.
- College legal representative shares the licence agreement for NCC to perform capital works at Kirkley Hall.
- NCC respond to College informing that whilst the licence agreement is somewhat elaborate for minor works there is little to cause concern within the terms. But also, that there are a small number of omissions in the agreement, for example relevant law relating to subsidy control and funding clawback.
- Ponies are transferred to Kirkley Hall 8th May 2022.
- College report that owing to NCC not yet signing works licence (owing to it not yet being fit for purpose), that TUPE should not proceed to plan.
- NCC question how relevant and reasonable this action is with College CEO who proposes a formal letter of reassurance on availability of capital works funding – letter issued same day.
- NCC respond to College legal representative with a redrafted works license agreement.
- College COO requests further assurances within the letter, it is reissued same day.
- College confirm satisfaction with the letter of reassurance.
- Active Northumberland staff TUPE transfer to College 11th May 2022.
- Lease expires at Tranwell 12th May 2022.
- Legal representatives on both sides continue to work on the works license.

## **June 2022.**

- NCC are due to commence some initial works with internal NCC resource w/c 7th June in order to meet tight timeframes that college require – College block this work at the last minute, however.
- RDA explain that riding will not commence until Mid-September owing to DBS clearance and request financial support from NCC with interim livery arrangements while ponies are non-income generating.
- Legal representatives on both sides continue to work on the works license.

## **July 2022**

- Crawford Higgins issue design drawings for the scheme.
- Design drawings are provided to College for approval and to append to works license.
- NCC confirms that £1500 Ex VAT will be offered to support interim livery while ponies are non-income generating, this will be provided by Active Northumberland.
- College has been unable to agree the terms of the works license that NCC deem essential (clawback, subsidy control, RDA contract).

## **August 2022**

- NCC have prepared the tender package in full for the physical works which will be published immediately when the works license is signed.

- College indicate that riding will not commence until October owing to delays in the DBS process of the RDA volunteer community.
- College has been unable to agree the terms of the works license that NCC deem essential to provide security of the investment.

### **September 2022**

- College confirm acceptance of outstanding terms of the works license including terms around funding clawback, RDA contract being in place and subsidy control. NCC have insisted on these terms to provide security for the investment, but College was reticent to accept them until now.
- The works license proposes works completion by end of January 2023.
- College and Morpeth Group RDA agreed the terms of their contract, it is shared with RDA National for final approval.

### **Next steps**

- NCC and College to sign works license.
- NCC to publish the physical works tender.
- NCC to appoint the preferred contractor and commence works – estimated to commence on site mid-October.
- College to continue DBS checks to allow commencement of riding lessons in October.

## Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Indirectly related to Northumberland County Council SEND Strategic Action Plan.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Creation of a capital project to value of <b>£171,366</b> funded from 'Contingency for Grant Funded Projects' 21/22' which is included in the current Capital MTFP.
<b>Legal</b>	<p>Legal advice was taken for fixed term contract staff, two factors being significant:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was believed some of the activities conducted at Kirkley Hall would be similar to those conducted at the Pegasus Centre under Active Northumberland.</li> <li>2. A number of fixed term contract employees had more than 2 years' service so needed to be treated as if they are permanent.</li> </ol> <p>On the basis of these significant factors, it was recommended to proceed as if TUPE does apply and transfer staff to Northumberland college</p> <p>The staff have now been TUPE transferred to Northumberland College and continue to perform their roll at Kirkley Hall. This is complete in full.</p>
<b>Procurement</b>	Capital works will require tendering via NEPO portal or similar.
<b>Human Resources</b>	<p>One permanent Active Northumberland admin staff member was redeployed and continues to work elsewhere in Active. This is complete in full.</p> <p>Active Northumberland TUPE transferred staff to Northumberland College with HR support – this is complete in full.</p>
<b>Property</b>	Property services support required during specification and tender of capital works and to resolve dilapidations.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Embedded as appendix 02.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None.

<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 Consideration</b>	The proposal set out in this report is based upon creating a more sustainable operation for the RDA, ensuring the function is available for residents with disabilities who benefit from the provision.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	It is not envisaged that this proposal would have any positive or negative impact on carbon reduction.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Health impacts (physical & mental) are delivered to users of the RDA provision.
<b>Wards</b>	Morpeth/Ponteland and surrounding catchment area.

## **Background Papers**

Appendix 01 - RDA Relocation - Equalities Impact Assessment.pdf



Appendix 01 - RDA  
Relocation - Equalities

## **Report Sign Off**

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

## **Author and Contact Details**

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# **Northumberland County Council**

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

### **Work Programme and Monitoring Report 2022 - 2023**

Page 151

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

26 September 2022 - CA

Agenda Item 10

## 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**

6 October 2022

Page 154	Regional Schools Director's Overview	An overview of the Regional Schools Director's (RSD) role and responsibilities.
	<b>Outcomes of Consultation on Berwick Consultation</b>	
	<b>Supported Accommodation Tender</b>	The report seeks permission from Cabinet to go to the market to commission a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties
	Pegasus Centre Update	
	The Northumberland Inclusion Strategy	An update on the report considered by Cabinet in March.  The purpose of this report is to present to FACS members and particularly those members involved in the Exclusion Task and Finish Group, the first Northumberland Strategic Inclusion Strategy which has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

3 November 2022

	Safeguard Activity Trends & CIS Benchmarking Report	
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	<p>SEND Place Planning and Capacity Strategy</p> <p>School Transport Arrangements Review</p> <p>Education Funding from Residential and Commercial builds (S106)</p>	<p>Report on funding for education allocated under S106 funding from new residential and commercial builds.</p>
1 December 2022		
Page 55	<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	
	<p><b>National Funding Formula and School Funding 2023/24</b></p>	<p><b>To update Cabinet regarding the National Funding Formula (NFF) and the implications for 2023/24 School Funding in Northumberland.</b></p>
2 February 2023		
	<p><b>School Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools for 2024/2025 Academic Year</b></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>

Page 156	Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2021	To present the education outcomes of Northumberland's looked after children for the academic year 2021 – 2022.
	Northumberland Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	To provide an overview of the work completed by the NSSP undertaken from 2021-2022.
	Adult Learning Service Annual Report: Learning and Skills Service	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.
2 March 2023		
	Director of Education Annual Report: Key Educational Outcomes (2021-2022 Academic Year)	Annual report on the key educational outcomes of the previous academic year. The Committee will be asked to identify any further areas for scrutiny.
	Finance & Performance	To consider current performance and the budgetary position for services within the Committee's terms of reference
	Safeguarding Activity Trend	To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.
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.
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Northumberland County Council</b>  <b>Family and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Monitoring Report 2022-2023</b></p>				
Ref	Date	Report	Decision	Outcome
1	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</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that:	No further action

		<b>Early Help Locality Services in Northumberland</b>	<ol 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 Supporting Families programme and the Family Hub and Start for life Programmes be noted.</li> </ol>	
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
Page 158	26 May 2022	<b>The Impact of the School Improvement Team</b>	<p>It was unanimously <b>RESOLVED</b> that:</p> <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</li> </ol>	A further report to be received at a later date



			and offer support to schools both inside and outside of Northumberland	
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
8	8 September 2022	<b>Finance and Performance</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the current performance and how it compared to benchmarks was noted.	No further action
9	8 September 2022	<b>Outcomes of Consultation on Proposals for the Coquet Partnership</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that Cabinet be advised that this Committee supported the recommendations as outlined in the report.	At its meeting on 21 September, Cabinet considered the Committee's comments.
10	8 September 2022	<b>Children's Services Annual Representations 2021- 2022</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted.	No further action
11	8 September 2022	<b>Children's Social Care – Annual Self Assessment</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report be noted	No further action

12	8 September 2022	<b>OFSTED Focused Visit to Northumberland Children's Services</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the information be noted	No further action
13	8 September 2022	<b>Proposal In Relation to Future Arrangements For The Youth Service</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that :-  1. The activity undertaken during the review be noted; and  2. Option 1, as outlined in the report, be agreed as the way forward.	No further action at this time
14 Page 160	8 September 2022	<b>Family Hub Development</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the Committee:-  1. Agree to proceed with the funding for the Family Hub offer; and  2. Support the development of the governance and wider processes to underpin this as outlined in the report.	No further action at this time
15	8 September 2022	<b>Support for Children and Young people with mental health needs in Northumberland</b>	<b>RESOLVED</b> that the contents of the report and the future plans be noted and the support now on offer for children and young people in Northumberland be recognised.	No further action