

Date: Thursday 17 October 2024 at 4.30 pm

Venue: Board Room, Dunedin House, Columbia Dr. Stockton on Tees, TS18 2NB

Cllr Robert Cook (Leader)

Cllr Pauline Beall
Cllr Nigel Cooke
Cllr Lisa Evans
Cllr Clare Besford
Cllr Steve Nelson
Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure**
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Minutes**

To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 12 September 2024 (Pages 7 - 14)
- 5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Complaints Report** (Pages 15 - 20)
- 6 Powering Our Future** (Pages 21 - 40)
- 7 The Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028** (Pages 41 - 74)
- 8 'Going for Gold Family Fun Day'**

As part of the Council's commitment to tackle inequality and poverty in the borough a series of Here to Help events are planned throughout 2024/25. This report provides an overview of the successful summer Here to Help 'Going for Gold Family Fun Day', summarising key outcomes and learning which will be to be incorporated into future planning. Attached at Appendix 1 is a detailed post event briefing. (Pages 75 - 90)

- 9 Scrutiny Review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment** (Pages 91 - 208)
- 10 School Performance 2023-24** (Pages 209 - 222)
- 11 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2024** (Pages 223 - 288)
- 12 Peer Assurance Challenge of Adult Social Care by the LGA and CQC Assurance Update** (Pages 289 - 368)
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Council) commissioned an independent peer assurance challenge by the LGA to assess the ability of the adult social care service to deliver good care and support to people, as well as preparedness for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. On 23rd September, we received formal notification of the CQC onsite assessment, which will take place in the week commencing 25th November for 3-4 days.
- The LGA assurance peer challenge completed in July 2024, mirrored the CQC assurance methodology and, whilst it did not provide a rating as we will receive from CQC, it did provide feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.
- Overall, the LGA assurance peer challenge feedback was very positive and identified some strong practice, a supportive and committed workforce and effective leadership and partnership arrangements. It also identified scope for developing our emerging approaches for co-production, recording and record-keeping and to support evidencing of strengths-based working.
- The current action plan (developed in November 2023) has been updated to reflect this feedback and will guide the service to make further improvements in its planning and delivery of care and support to the people of Stockton-on-Tees.
- 13 Customer Service Excellence** (Pages 369 - 372)

Members of the Public - Rights to Attend Meeting

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100A(4), members of the public are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda papers.

Persons wishing to obtain any further information on this meeting, including the opportunities available for any member of the public to speak at the meeting; or for details of access to the meeting for disabled people, please

Contact: Democratic Services Officer, Peter Bell on email peter.bell@stockton.gov.uk

KEY - Declarable interests are:-

- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's)
- Other Registerable Interests (ORI's)
- Non Registerable Interests (NRI's)

Members – Declaration of Interest Guidance



Table 1 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	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.
Contracts	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.
Land and property	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.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	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.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (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 have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* '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 Registerable Interest

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) 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) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

CABINET

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 12 September 2024.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Leader), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Lisa Evans (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

Officers: Mike Greene, Geraldine Brown, Garry Cummings, Reuben Kench, Ged Morton, Majella McCarthy, Carolyn Nice, Jane Edmonds, Clare Harper, Eddie Huntington, Iain Robinson, Julie Butcher and Peter Bell.

Also in attendance:

Apologies:

CAB/36/24 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

CAB/37/24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Steve Nelson declared a Other Registerable Interest in respect of item - Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint as he was a member of Tees Active Board. Councillor Steve Nelson withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

CAB/38/24 Minutes

The minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

CAB/39/24 Financial Update and Medium Term Financial Plan (2024/25 Quarter 1)

Consideration was given to a report that summarised the Council's financial performance and position at the end of the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year. Members were aware from the budget report in February 2024 that the Council had a budget gap of £1.9m in the current financial year rising to £8.1m in 2026/27, with the transformation programme being key to resolve the financial position.

The Powering our Futures programme and associated transformation reviews were well underway and Members were aware that these reviews were addressing the aforementioned budget gap. The reviews were progressing well and an update would be provided at the October Cabinet meeting.

The financial position for the Council for the first quarter of the financial year (to 30th June 2024) highlighted a projected overspend of £3.9m against the budget, effectively the Council was on target to achieve the

transformation savings but further pressures had created a further budget gap. Growing demand for Council services and the increased cost of delivery was putting pressure on several budget headings. An additional £12.5m was added to the budget in February's budget report, and this overspend was over and above that additional investment. Work was underway to look at ways to mitigate this projected overspend and the position would continue to be closely monitored and managed throughout the remainder of the financial year. As part of the budget process, a number of earmarked reserves were paused to allow the Council to manage future risks and if the pressures materialise as expected, this would need to be met from these reserves.

These challenges were not unique to Stockton and the financial pressures experienced by many councils across the country was well documented. Whilst the Council was able to re-direct earmarked reserves to resolve immediate pressures this was not sustainable, over the medium term and the position needed to be addressed. Future reports would provide and update to Cabinet and work preparing for the 2025/26 budget and MTFP had commenced. Given the overall position, work exploring options for Phase 2 of the transformation programme would be progressed.

The report also presented an update on the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The update to the Medium Term Financial Plan and the current level of General Fund balances be noted along with the intention to progress further transformation reviews.
2. The revised Capital Programme at Appendix A of the report be noted.

CAB/40/24 Minutes of Various Bodies

In accordance with the Council's Constitution or previous practice the minutes of the meeting of the bodies indicated below are submitted to members for consideration:-

TVCA Cabinet – 19 July 2024
SSP – 30 May 2024

RESOLVED that the above minutes be received.

CAB/41/24 Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint Delivery

Consideration was given to a report on the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint Delivery.

In July 2024 the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint, which sets out a vision and development framework for transformational change of this area over the next 25 years, was approved by Cabinet. The report

provided an update on specific projects within the Stockton Central and North Thornaby Blueprint area which were referenced in the July 2024 report and sought approval of funding to enable delivery and further progression of work as required.

The report highlighted the following areas:-

- Splash and Town Hall
- Municipal Quarter
- Democratic Space and Council Chamber
- Stockton Waterfront and Community Diagnostic Centre

Several other development sites and opportunities were identified within the Blueprint. To progress these sites and gain a greater level of detail and understanding, further work in the form of feasibility, development briefs and detailed design would be required, therefore it was recommended that an allocation of funding to support this additional work be made, with further detail on site specific work to be reported to future Cabinet meetings.

Following previous approvals in July 2023 and July 2024, it was recommended that remaining unallocated funding from previously approved sums is allocated as set out in table 1 within the report with authority delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance and Director of Corporate Services to agree all contracts, agreements and any variations between the allocation following further formal engagement with and procurement of contractors.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The budget allocation be approved as set out in table 1 of the report to support delivery of Town Hall redevelopment, Splash refurbishment, Council Chamber, Stockton Waterfront and Community Diagnostic Centre and further feasibility works linked to the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint.

2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with Director of Finance, Transformation and Performance and Director of Corporate Services to agree all contracts, agreements and any variations between the allocation set out in table 1 of the report in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for or Regeneration and Housing and Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture following further formal engagement with, and procurement of contractors.

CAB/42/24 Accelerating Affordable Housing Delivery (A quality home for all)

Consideration was given to a report on Accelerating affordable housing delivery ('A quality home for all').

Government had recently announced an overhaul of the planning system to "fix the foundations and grow the economy". As part of this

announcement Government stated its ambition to increase the delivery of quality affordable and social housing and to bring forward investment to help deliver “the biggest increase in affordable house building in a generation”. The need to build affordable housing was recognised not only as an economic driver but a key enabler for local leaders to manage local pressures including tackling and preventing homelessness.

Like many local authorities the Council was experiencing increased demand for affordable housing (for sale and rent) and these pressures were being felt by multiply service areas (including homelessness, care leavers and vulnerable adults). Against this backdrop and to ensure the Council was best placed to meet the Governments housing growth agenda, specifically their commitment to increasing and diversifying housing supply an affordable housing delivery option appraisal had commenced. The option appraisal would explore opportunities for how the Council could increase the delivery of affordable housing, both in terms of numbers and speed of delivery. The report provided an overview of this appraisal.

The report highlighted the following areas:-

- Background – current housing demand
- Ongoing Place Select Committee scrutiny review
- The national agenda
- Affordable housing delivery option appraisal

RESOLVED that:-

1. The current pressures faced by the Council in terms of addressing our residents housing needs (as detailed in paragraph 1 of the report) be noted and the emerging findings of the current Place Select Committee ‘Affordable Housing Delivery’ scrutiny review (as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report) be noted.
2. The option appraisal which will explore the possibilities available to the Council to accelerate affordable housing delivery in the borough be and maximise inward investment to address current and projected housing need be supported.
3. Following the conclusion of recommendation 2, a further report be presented back to Cabinet.

CAB/43/24 Enhanced Mainstream Schools Consultation

Consideration was given to a report on Enhanced Mainstream Schools Consultation.

A consultation would be launched in September 2024 relating to the proposal to change Enhanced Mainstream Schools in Stockton-on-Tees to Additionally Resourced Provision and SEN Units, increasing the capacity within the Borough for school places for children with SEND and ensuring provision meets the needs of children locally.

A thirty-day consultation would launch on 9 September 2024 to include parents, schools and key stakeholders.

The proposal had been coproduced by a working group with key services within the council and Stockton Parent Carer Forum had been engaged in the proposals.

Parents and Carers would have an opportunity to meet with senior members of the SEND Services to discuss the proposal and open day listening events had been arranged during consultation period.

Following consultation, a decision would be required by Cabinet on the proposed model and the financial implications.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CAB/44/24 Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan

Consideration was given to a report on the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan.

Local authority partnerships had a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnerships responsibilities in producing a plan. It stated that it was the duty of each local authority, in consultation with partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area be provided and funded, how they would operate, and what functions would be carried out.

The Youth Justice Plan reports on the vision, strategy, governance, leadership and partnership arrangements. It reflected and built upon strong performance against key national performance measures. It documented key themes around child first principles, workforce development, diversion, exploitation and working with families. The Youth Justice Plan was produced after consultation with partners. The Plan documents seven key strategic objective for the forthcoming year as follows:-

- 1) Help children stay out of the criminal justice system.
- 2) To reduce reoffending.
- 3) Reduce the use of custody and prioritise effective resettlement.
- 4) Strengthen our responses to Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation.
- 5) To reduce the number of school exclusions.
- 6) To refresh our practice in our work victims and restorative practice.
- 7) To develop a Participation model of practice.

A copy of the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Stockton-on-Tees Youth Justice Plan be approved.

CAB/45/24 The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

There was no specific appointments process prescribed in the Regulations or Guidance, save that the Council should appoint the Panel and consider the issues detailed at paragraphs 8 – 11 of the report.

The Regulations required a Panel of at least three members, however, the Council's Constitution stipulated that its Panel should comprise four members, with a quorum of 3. None of the Panel members must be serving elected Members of the authority in respect of which it makes recommendations, nor a member of a committee or sub-committee of such authority. Panel Members must also not be disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

Guidance associated with the Regulations required appointing authorities to be satisfied that proposed Panel members would result in the Panel Membership being sufficiently independent and well qualified to discharge the Panel's functions, and representative of the diversity of communities in the Council's area.

The terms of office of Stockton's previous Independent Remuneration Panel expired on 31 May 2024. The Panel comprised the following non-elected members:

Tony Campbell
Kate Hoskin
Mark White
Terry Laing

Further details of the above non-elected members were attached to the report.

It was proposed that the previous members of the Panel, described above and attached to the report be reappointed.

The functions of the Panel were attached to the report. These were the functions prescribed by regulation and detailed in the Council's Constitution.

It was recommended that Council appoints a Chair. Tony Campbell was the Panel's previous Chair and had lots of experience in this role. It was recommended that he is appointed as the Chair of the Remuneration Panel.

It was recommended that the terms of office of the Panel Members be up to 31 May 2028, unless they were removed, resign or otherwise leave

office before then. This would enable preparations for a new Panel to be established (or for the incumbent panel to be re-appointed) during the first year of the new Council, after the 2027 elections.

Council had previously reserved the right to remove any one, or more, of the Panel Members at any time. This power should be retained.

It was proposed that the payments previously agreed for the Panel Members' work be retained. These were:-
Chair - £350 per day, subject to a maximum for each review of £1,750
Other Panel Members - £75 per day, subject to a maximum of £375 for each review; and All Panel Members – reasonable travel and subsistence expenses.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. The previous members of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, as detailed in paragraph 4, and in Appendix 1 of the report, be reappointed, with their terms of office expiring on 31 May 2028.
2. The right be reserved to remove anyone, or more, of the Panel members at any time, as indicated in paragraph 10 of the report.
3. Tony Campbell be appointed as the Chair of the Panel.
4. The Panel's functions, as detailed in the Council's Constitution and Appendix 2 of the report, be noted.
5. The allowances for the Panel's work be as specified at paragraph 11 of the report be approved.

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 OCTOBER 2024

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook

LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGSCO) ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2023/24

SUMMARY

The report provides Cabinet with details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter for the Council for 2023/24. There were 48 enquiries submitted to the Ombudsman during the year, 13 met the threshold for a detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of the 13 complaint investigations, 8 were upheld. All recommendations made by the Ombudsman, following their investigations, have been accepted and implemented by the Council. There was one formal public interest report that was published in 2023/24 relating to school transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet to note the report which sets out that the Council has fully complied with the recommendations from complaints investigated by the Ombudsman.

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure Members are aware of the position regarding complaints to the Ombudsman about the Council and to provide assurance that the Council is responding in line with LGSCO expectations.

DETAIL

1. Each year the Ombudsman publishes its annual letter and summary of statistics on the complaints and enquiries it has received about Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and the decisions made. The Council has received the latest report for the financial year ending 31 March 2024.
2. Of the 48 complaints and enquiries dealt with by the Ombudsman in 2023/24, most related to Education and Children's Services (20), and Adult Care Services (8). 13 were progressed to investigation, with 8 of the 13 complaints being upheld. The number of complaints investigated by the LGSCO in 2023/24 was slightly higher than the previous year (10 investigations in 2022/23), however numbers of non-Ombudsman complaints

received by the Council in 2023/24 has fallen from the previous year, with 79% being successfully resolved as part of the early resolution process (i.e. within 5 working days).

3. Of the 8 upheld Ombudsman complaint investigations, 5 related to Education and Children's Services, 2 relating to Adult care services and 1 related to Taxation. The report details that the LGSCO was satisfied with the remedy offered by the Council (such as an apology, financial redress) in advance of the complainant raising the complaint with the LGSCO, in only 13% of upheld cases (1 out of 8 cases). Therefore, at the forthcoming annual Officer Complaints Forum (January 2025), a session will specifically focus on how to effectively use remedy in resolving complaints. This advice and guidance will support officers who are investigating complaints to ensure that appropriate remedy is offered at an early stage and hopefully improve performance against this measure.
4. The Ombudsman publishes public interest reports for more serious cases to share the lessons learned from the cases they investigate, as well as holding authorities to account. In 2023/24, 27 Public Interest Reports were issued nationally, one of these was issued for the Borough of Stockton on Tees. The report related to a complaint raised in relation to school transport, Cabinet previously received a report regarding this in July 2023. The Council has accepted and has fully implemented the recommendations from the report.

FURTHER INFORMATION

5. A copy of the 2023/24 performance tables received from the LGSCO is attached at **Appendix I** of this report. A useful guide to interpretation of the Ombudsman's statistics is available on the [LGSCO website](#).
6. Comparative data of neighbouring authorities and CIPFA authorities is attached at **Appendix II** of the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. None as a direct result of this report. The financial implications of individual complaints would be dealt with separately as part of the responses to those complaints.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. They may, however, arise on a case-by-case basis, depending on the particular circumstances of the complaint and related decision and Legal Service input is called upon in these cases. The Corporate Governance Group also has a Legal Service representative.

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. LGSCO complaint investigations and any associated public interest reports create public relations risks to the Council and can undermine resident confidence. The current complaints policy and procedures are designed to minimise these risks, and the oversight provided by the Complaints Team and Corporate Governance Group provide assurance to senior management and members that complaints are taken seriously, corrective action implemented and learning maximised.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD / COUNCILLORS

10. The Ombudsman complaints information does not indicate any significant ward specific information or trends.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

11. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review of Local Government complaints for 2023/24 has been published and relevant extracts have been included in this report. A copy of the complete report can be viewed on the [LGSCO website](#).

Contact Officer: Martin Skipsey
Post Title: Assistant Director of Procurement and Governance
Telephone No: 01642 526364
E-mail Address: martin.skipsey@stockton.gov.uk

Appendix I - Stockton data from the annual report 2023/24

Complaints upheld	
62% of complaints investigated were upheld.	National average of 79% in similar organisations
8 upheld decisions	
4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Average for authorities of Stockton's type is 4.6 upheld decisions per 100, 000
Statistics are based on a total of 13 investigations for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations	
100% of cases the Ombudsman were satisfied Stockton had successfully implemented for recommendations.	National average of 100% in similar organisations
Statistics based on a total of 5 compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation	
In 13% of upheld cases the Ombudsman found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman	
1 satisfactory remedy decision	
Statistics are based on a total of 8 upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	

Appendix II - Comparative data**Tees Valley**

Tees Valley Local Authorities	Upheld 22/23	Upheld 23/24	Compliance with Recommendations (23/24)
Stockton	70% (7/10)	62% (8/13)	100%
Darlington	67% (6/9)	89% (8/9)	100%
Hartlepool	0% (0/2)	100% (2/2)	N/A – no recommendations
Middlesbrough	73% (8/11)	60% (3/5)	100%
Redcar & Cleveland	100% (11/11)	75% (3/4)	100%

Northeast

Northeast Authorities	Upheld 22/23	Upheld 23/24	Compliance with Recommendations (23/24)
Durham	52% (11/21)	67% (10/15)	100%
Gateshead	57% (8/14)	100% (4/4)	100%
Newcastle	70% (7/10)	70% (7/10)	100%
North Tyneside	91% (10/11)	92% (12/13)	100%
Northumberland	84% (16/19)	69% (18/26)	100%
South Tyneside	67% (4/6)	67% (2/3)	100%
Sunderland	50% (4/8)	92% (11/12)	100%

CIPFA Nearest Neighbours

Nearest Neighbours	Upheld 22/23	Upheld 23/24	Compliance with Recommendations (23/24)
Dudley	78% (21/27)	59% (13/22)	100%
Northeast Lincolnshire	88% (7/8)	89% (8/9)	100%
Plymouth	67% (14/21)	67% (14/21)	100%
Rotherham	86% (6/7)	67% (4/6)	100%
North Lincolnshire	67% (2/3)	83% (10/12)	100%
Derby	71% (10/14)	78% (14/18)	100%
Doncaster	75% (9/12)	70% (7/10)	100%
Wakefield	71% (10/14)	67% (8/12)	86%
Bolton	94% (17/18)	90% (9/10)	100%
Wigan	80% (12/15)	100% (8/8)	100%
Warrington	89% (8/9)	88% (7/8)	100%
Telford & Wrekin	44% (4/9)	50% (2/4)	100%
Walsall	86% (12/14)	95% (18/19)	100%
Darlington	67% (6/9)	89% (8/9)	100%
Halton	80% (4/5)	50% (1/2)	100%

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Agenda Item 6

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2024

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Portfolio Title – Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Cook

Powering Our Future – Programme Update

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Powering Our Future Programme including:

- Transformation Powering Our Future – proposals for new ways of working and recommended options for the following reviews:
 - Waste Collection
 - Fees and Charges – Car Parking
 - Fees and Charges – School Meals
 - Fees and Charges - Non-residential care charge
 - Administration and Business Services – Courier Services
 - Community Safety and Regulatory Services.
- Communities Powering Our Future:
 - Building our intelligence, skills and experience
 - Rolling out an Appreciative Inquiry approach
 - Partnership working
 - Effective communication and Proud to Care campaign.
- Partnerships Powering Our Future:
 - Place Leadership Board
 - Business Ambassadors Group.
- Colleagues Powering Our Future – implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy.
- Regeneration Powering Our Future – work is taking place to re-frame this Mission with a focus on Place Making. Further detail will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISIONS

Cabinet is recommended to agree the updates and recommendations to ensure that the Council continues to deliver its commitment to the Powering Our Future Missions; to address the financial challenges we face at the same time as improving outcomes for communities, including:

- Creation of opportunities to build brighter futures for our communities and reduce inequality, using the limited amount of money we have available.
- Carefully managing our resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by our residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the recommended options set out in the report in respect of the Waste and Recycling Reviews:
 - Introduction of charging for green waste from 1st April 2025
 - Introduction of weekly food waste and recycling service from 1st April 2026 with the acquisition of associated vehicles and the development of a Waste Transfer Station
 - Cease the provision of the Community Recycling Centres with immediate effect.
2. Approve the removal of the maximum charge for non-residential care.
3. Approve an increase in the charges to schools for the provision of traded school meals service to reflect the true cost of the service provided; and increase the per meal charge for Council maintained schools to £3 per meal to reflect the increased cost of provision.
4. Approve the introduction of Free School Meals auto-enrolment as detailed in paragraphs 71 and 72.
5. Approve the changes to car parking charges in Stockton and Yarm Town centres; including the removal of the first hour free parking and introduction of the rate of £1.50 for three hours stay in short stay car parks, alongside an uplift to long stay car parking charges.
6. Note the operational changes in respect of Administration and Business Services, Community Safety and Regulatory Services set out in paragraphs 76 to 81.
7. Note that the changes proposed will contribute £375,000 in 24/25, £2,296,000 in 25/26 and £4,644,000 in 26/27 towards the budget gap estimated within the budget report to Council in February 2024, at the same time as delivering improved outcomes, set out in the detail of the report.
8. Note the progress updates for other aspects of the Transformation Mission outlined in paragraph 10.
9. Note the progress updates for all other Missions of the Powering our Future Programme.

Cabinet Recommend to Council

10. It is proposed that Cabinet recommend to Council approval of £4.3m prudential

borrowing for the acquisition of food and recycling waste receptacles, green waste bins, site preparation costs for a Waste Transfer Station and resurfacing of Wellington Square car park.

Introduction - Powering Our Future

1. The Powering our Future Programme continues to drive our plans to be a bold, brave and innovative Council and work with our partners to make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong.
2. Significant progress has been made against all the Missions in the Programme, supporting us in our planned approach to carefully manage our resources over the longer term. This will see us create a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that offer value for money and are valued by our residents.
3. Our approach continues to be iterative, building over time, to engage communities and undertake thorough reviews. This can avoid the need to make short-term cuts, which can be damaging to services and the residents we serve.
4. The remainder of this report provides an update on each of the Missions, for Cabinet comment and approval. Regular reports to Cabinet will ensure that our member-led approach drives the development and delivery of Powering Our Future.

Transformation Powering Our Future

5. This Mission will identify new and innovative ways of working that are better for communities and more efficient.
6. In April 2024, Cabinet agreed the scope for each of the Transformation Reviews in Phase 1 of the Programme. These provided clarity on the objectives for each project, in alignment with the Council's Mission Statement.
7. The reviews have now moved into Discovery and Design stage. This work has led to a comprehensive understanding of organisational challenges, to develop and refine ideas for transformation making use of research, data and intelligence.
8. As part of this process, we have and continue to carry out extensive engagement with Members and colleagues to ensure robust challenge and feedback in shaping the change. This includes:
 - Members and Colleagues Marketplace Events (providing information about all Phase 1 reviews)
 - Colleagues Community of Practice sessions (managing interdependencies between projects across the programme)
 - Member Briefings
 - Informal Member Engagement Group (a cross-party group met in August to inform fees and charges reviews)
 - Scrutiny Committees (the Scrutiny Programme for 2024-25 has been designed and

agreed to inform reviews where areas of policy change are anticipated)

9. The findings relating to an initial tranche of reviews have now been concluded. Drivers for change along with options, proposals and recommendations for transformation are summarised below.
10. In addition to the areas below, we have made progress in relation to:
 - Discharge to Assess / Reablement – a new way of working is being progressed that will see the council de-commission current provision and reallocate resources for a more joined up approach to reablement. This will focus on supporting more people to live independently through a single-provider approach that makes every contact count and will support high performance of the local system, which is acknowledged as one of the best in the county. This is estimated to save up to £500,000.
 - Placement Sufficiency Strategy – this operational strategy sets out our approach to provide a range of accommodation and support services that:
 - Keep children with their families of origin, wherever it is safe to do so.
 - Provide children with alternative, nurturing homes if they need short, or long-term alternative care or support arrangements.
 - Enable our children and young people with disabilities to live an ordinary life.
 - Introduction of new practice for Children's Services – this supports us in achieving the objectives set out as part of the placement sufficiency strategy and includes:
 - The creation of an Edge of Care Team designed to work intensively with individuals, siblings and families to maintain them in the family home rather than take them into care. The team has been successful in keeping children out of care, with 73 children and young people being supported by the team since January 2024.
 - The establishment of the Social Work academy and International Recruitment address recruitment and retention issues.

Waste Collection & Recycling

11. A Place Committee Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste and Recycling was undertaken in 2023, with the assistance of Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). WRAP provided guidance around a range of considerations on how alternative collection models could support the Council to meet the new requirements set out by the Government, whilst also tackling low recycling rates and increased waste disposal costs.
12. In support of this, in February 2024 Cabinet agreed to: change to fortnightly refuse collections; adopt weekly 'multi-stream' collections of dry recycling and food waste; undertake a review of green waste collections; and implement a comprehensive communication and community engagement plan on proposed changes.
13. Options for implementation have been the focus of a transformation review, which also responded to the following drivers for change:
 - Significant gate fee increases linked to changes in the current waste disposal contract arrangements. These costs are already factored into the MTFP and

- contribute to the budget gap.
- A new statutory duty to collect food waste separately, and to treat this waste as recycling.
 - Our recycling levels are currently the lowest in the Tees Valley and behind target. Collection model changes have been proven to be the primary catalyst for improving recycling levels.

Green Waste

14. The current position in respect of the Green Waste service is as follows:

- Collections currently take place for 30 weeks per year although the service is only funded for 26 weeks
- As part of the new 'Simpler Recycling' guidelines, councils are required to provide a 36-week service from April 2026 which would result in a budget pressure for our council of circa £70,000
- There is no charge for the service to households, with the service effectively fully subsidised by the Council
- We are one of the few councils in the country not to charge for the service.

15. It is proposed to introduce a chargeable green waste service from April 2025 at a charge of £40 per annum to households.

16. A range of options are available for charging, and work has been undertaken to understand comparable charges across local authorities. These ranged between £35-£60. In the Northeast, the highest charge is Newcastle at £43, however we understand several Councils are in the process of reviewing their charges. The proposed charge of £40 therefore compares favourably to other local authorities and is the recommended option.

17. Associated with this proposal:

- Residents will be able to sign up to the scheme through a variety of channels from December 2024.
- The first bin will be provided free of charge to each household (effectively paid for from the income collected).
- Households with larger green space will be able to benefit from the new arrangements as additional bins can be purchased on request for a charge of £25.

18. Subject to the pace and level of take-up amongst households, the proposal is estimated to provide up to £600,000 income in year 1 and £1,200,000 in year 2 and future years, before the costs associated with implementation. The income modelling assumption is based on 20% take-up in year 1 with a further 20% take-up the year after. The model has been run following the gathering of intelligence from other comparable authorities who have rolled out chargeable green waste in recent years.

19. There are 2 options for the purchase of the bins which need to be factored into the model:

- The one-off capital cost of purchasing the bins is £1,000,000 for 40,000 bins. This is expected to cover the take up for years 1 and 2. This cost would exceed any potential new income in the first year.
 - An alternative is to use prudential borrowing powers to fund the bins. This would cost around £130,000 per annum and effectively spread the up front cost over a period of ten years.
20. Given the financial pressure in 2025/26, it is proposed that Cabinet agree to the changes and recommend to Council borrowing £1m to fund the Capital cost associated with the acquisition of a stock of green bins.
21. The Council will work with communities to ensure there is an equitable approach to implementation, which will include extensive community engagement and support for change. We will explore opportunities that can build on community strengths for shared approaches amongst neighbours.

New Waste and Recycling Service

22. Based on the WRAP modelling, with a preferred option previously proposed by Scrutiny Committee and endorsed by Cabinet (set out a paragraph 12), it is now proposed to progress with the following for delivery:
- Collect food waste and recycling every week
 - Collect residual waste on a fortnightly basis
 - Each household will receive an additional weighted bag for the collection of dry recycling and a new indoor and outdoor caddy for food waste. Giving every household the opportunity to increase the amount of waste that can be collected and recycled on a weekly basis.
23. The introduction of weekly food waste collection is required from April 2026. Since this is a new burden to local authorities, Government is required to cover all additional costs. As members will recall the most cost effective means of collecting this waste is on the same vehicle. This model also results in a cleaner product alongside increasing our recycling rates. This assumed approach is reflected in the options analysis and proposals below.
24. It is proposed that changes will take affect from April 2026 to ensure we meet statutory requirements and allow sufficient lead in time to make operational arrangements and to communicate and support residents with the changes.
25. Back alleys have unique challenges relating to waste collection. High levels of waste are disposed of here, and fly tipping can be an issue if not carefully managed. The proposal therefore includes the retention of waste on a weekly basis for these areas only, in order to address these issues.
26. New receptacles are needed to implement the proposed new model set out at paragraph 22, based on WRAP modelling.

Food Waste

27. This requires new receptacles for residents as follows:

- 130,000 5L Internal Food Caddies costing £1.25 per unit to store waste in households
- 130,000 23L Food Caddies costing £3.30 per unit to be used externally and to be collected from waste collection service
- 250 400L Commercial Food Waste bins costing £370 per unit.

28. The Government has committed to fund the costs of food waste collection and disposal. At the current time we do not know our allocation for the new revenue funding but based on the proposal we are estimating that this should be £150k up front to meet enablement costs and then £900k per annum from 26/27 to meet ongoing costs.

Recycling

29. The recommendation approved by Cabinet to move to weekly recycling and food waste collections and fortnightly residual waste collections, precludes the use of bins as a collection receptacle as the collection vehicle used for this method cannot accommodate a lift for bins and requires recycling to be partially segregated at the kerbside. This was assessed as part of the Scrutiny Review as scenario 4 and it was determined that the use of a co-mingled bin comes with a capital cost of £2.3 million, high contamination rates and a move to a gate fee for recyclable material therefore is not a viable option against the approved recommendation of scenario 3.

30. Under the new service, each property requires an additional recycling receptacle. Feedback from residents suggests they would prefer a bag that is heavier to prevent it from blowing away in heavy winds. Currently the white bags offered to residents have a 500g weight within them. Operational modelling will be undertaken to identify the preferred receptacle that is both efficient and meets residents' needs.

31. Based on the above, the overall estimated cost of new receptacles covering food and recycling collection changes is in the region of £1.2m. This can either be funded in year from one off revenue budgets, which would add to the existing budget gap as included in February 2024 MTFP report, or alternatively the cost could be funded through prudential borrowing, which would allow the cost to be spread over ten years. Based on the overall financial position of the Council, it is therefore proposed that we fund the costs through prudential borrowing to maintain the position outlined in the February 2024 MTFP report to Council.

32. The new food waste collection and disposal service create further logistical demands, including:

- Based on the model proposed, new vehicles are required. The most efficient model involves food waste and recycling collection in one vehicle.
- Additional vehicles will also need secure overnight storage. The Council's depot space is already at full capacity and there is no capacity on our current Fleet

Operator License to add more vehicles to existing depots, therefore there is a requirement to identify space.

- The collection method means the vehicles will be fuller sooner, creating the requirement for more rounds.

33. To deliver proposals, 22 recycling vehicles are needed. We currently lease 11 vehicles just for recycling which are not suitable to collect food waste. These vehicles will no longer be in use after April 2026.
34. Under the proposed new arrangements, we will continue to lease vehicles as the cost difference between borrowing and buying is negligible. However, there are significant operational benefits to leasing linked fleet management and maintenance.
35. It is proposed to establish a Waste Transfer Station, which will allow waste to be sorted and transferred onto different vehicles ready for transportation to the designated recycling facility. This will require less collection rounds and establish further storage space for vehicles. This would require additional capital investment of £2.5m.
36. Consideration has been given to direct transfer to the Recycling Facility in Hartlepool although this will add significant downtime when considering travelling time as well as waiting times as the facility will be used by a multitude of other local authorities. This would equate to the equivalent of 3 additional rounds therefore the most appropriate and cost-effective solution is to use a transfer station in the Borough, which would allow us to depot the recycling and then arrange separate bulk haulage to the recycling facility.
37. Whilst the acquisition of the land can be funded through the DEFRA Food Waste capital grant of £1.4m, a further borrowing requirement of £1.1m would be required to enable delivery of the overall capital investment outlined above.

Community Recycling Centres

38. The Council still operates 5 Community Recycling Centres in the Borough. These are on private land, attract significant antisocial behaviour, and we are under increasing pressure from landowners (in fact some have recently closed at the landowner's request).
39. The facilities were opened at a time when we had few recycling opportunities. However, the proposed new waste and recycling model will give residents the opportunity to increase the amount of waste that can be collected and recycled on a weekly basis, in a more convenient way. Other recycling options are also available to communities, and it is therefore proposed to close the Community Recycling Centres with immediate effect.
40. This will prevent fly tipping and offer a financial saving of up to £66,000 per annum increasing to a potential saving of £95,000 upon the increase of the gate fee in 2025 and supports our plans to mitigate the budget gap estimated within the budget report to Council in February 2024,
41. Communication and engagement - the proposals above include a high level of change

for residents. Supporting our communities to understand this, whilst ensuring high take up from the start of the new arrangements is fundamental to the success of the new service, to delivering higher recycling rates and maintaining an exemplary service. A detailed communications and engagement plan focusing on education and support for residents is therefore being developed and an allocation of £200,000 is included alongside other implementation costs.

42. Cost implications - the overall financial implications from the above proposals are:

	2025/26	2026/27 and Future Years
	£'000	£'000
Green Waste Income	(600)	(1,200)
Alternate Weekly		(1,000)
Recycling centres	(66)	(95)
Estimated revenue food grant (To be announced)	(150)	(900)
Communication & Engagement Costs	200	
Prudential Borrowing Repayments	130	361
Total reduction in budget envelope	(486)	(2,834)

43. There are significant upfront one off costs that will be required prior to April 2026 to allow delivery of the service considering the changes referenced above. These are:

- £1.1m to support Waste Transfer Station (after applying Capital Grant)
- Green Waste receptacles £1m
- Recycling and food waste receptacles £1.2m.

44. In order to fund these one-off costs, it is proposed that Cabinet agree to the changes and recommend to Council approval of prudential borrowing of £3.3m with an annual repayment cost of £361k.

Fees and Charges Review

Non-residential Care

Charge

45. Income generated from fees and charges for non-residential care has not been reviewed since 2017. At this time, it was agreed that Stockton would continue implementing the maximum charge of 60% of the cost of a Grade 1 care home placement. As such, the Council has a maximum charge for residents receiving care at home of £459.60 per week. In a number of cases this is below the true cost of care. This is adding to the financial pressures experienced within this service.

46. Following a change to legislation many years ago, most councils from a national and regional perspective removed the 60% cap. Hartlepool is the only other regional authority that has a cap, which is no more than equivalent of current weekly residential cap which is £802 per week. Having reviewed 24 other authorities, many our CIPFA nearest neighbours, all charge the full cost of the package.

Recommendations and Benefits

47. It is proposed to remove the maximum charge so that clients with resources over the savings threshold or with eligible incomes would pay the full cost of their care package.

48. We will ensure that all charges are dealt in a fair and consistent way, subject to a financial assessment that ensures we protect residents from impacts of inequality and that they are supported to receive their full eligible income.

49. Proposals support our approach to mitigate the budget gap, set out in the budget report to Council in February 2024.

50. There are currently 49 clients paying the maximum charge. If all of these clients paid the full cost of their care this would generate an additional £300,000 p.a. income. All clients are offered a financial assessment to assess what they can afford to pay, as such a deduction of 50% has been applied to arrive at an estimated additional income of £150,000p.a.

51. To realise these benefits, it is proposed that changes are effective immediately for new clients and implemented in April 2025 for existing clients. This will allow time for an updated financial assessment to be undertaken.

Car Parking

52. Income generated through car parking has been unstable since 2020, with Covid having a significant affect. Shopping behaviours have also changed in this time, with a shift to online and some big-name high-street retailers have left Stockton High Street.

53. Costs to maintain and operate car parks currently outweighs income. Investment needs have also been identified to ensure our car parks remain fit for purpose, and whilst some investment has taken place in recent years, we do not have adequate investment to keep our car parks to the optimum standard.

54. The Council currently offers the first hour free in our car parks. We are an outlier in doing so, and this can disincentivise residents to use active travel such as walking or cycling to visit our town centres.

55. Tees Valley Combined Authority funded a fixed term initiative of free parking within short stay car parks for the period of February 2021 to February 2023. Following this period the council has not been recovering sufficient income to cover the costs of maintaining and operating its car parks.

56. The Council is currently forecasting a shortfall in car parking of approximately £500,000 against the car parking budget. In addition to this investment is required to maintain and improve car parking infrastructure which is a further budget pressure. There also needs to be consideration of the overhead costs associated with running and maintaining car parks that are not charged to the car parking budget.

Recommendations and benefits

57. For car parks in Stockton Town Centre and Yarm, it is proposed to remove the first hour free, introduce charging for the first 3 hours and increase long stay in all car parks. Standardised pricing for car park passes available to use at all of these sites, will also be offered at a discounted price. These changes apply to Stockton Town Centre and Yarm only as these are currently the areas a parking charge system is implemented. Options for different pricing have been modelled and are shown below.

Options	Annual increase in income
£0.50 for first 30 mins £1.50 thereafter	£500,000
£1.50 for first 3 hrs	£800,000
£2 for first 3 hrs	£1,250,000

58. The recommended option is £1.50 for the first three hours, which is competitive compared to other car parks within the Tees Valley. For stays up to 1 hour Stockton’s new price will be comparable and for stays up to 3 hours it will be the cheapest.

59. The car park surface at Wellington Square Car Park requires resurfacing at a cost of £1m. It is recommended that this is funded by prudential borrowing with the annual borrowing repayments of £80,000 funded from the new income generated from the proposal.

60. To improve customer experience all machines will be upgraded to allow contactless payments. This is alongside the pay by phone method and cash payments already in use. There will also be upgrades to a small number of faulty machines. This will be a one off cost of £80,000, covered by the new income generated within the first year.

61. Enforcement of car parking penalty charge notices will continue to be maintained and potential for additional income linked to the proposal kept under review.

62. With implementation in February 2025, these measures are estimated to generate additional income of £800,000 per year.

63. There are no proposed changes to: Billingham, Norton, Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby.

64. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the new arrangements will be reviewed after 1 year, to consider the impact on residents, visitors, and council finances.

65. The Blueprint for Stockton Town Centre and North Thornaby also considers accessibility into our town centres ensuring residents and visitors have options including utilising active travel, public transport and car parking.

66. Approval of the recommendations will support the Council to:

- Ensure sustainability of the service and recovery of the associated costs of the service
- Meet the current maintenance and development requirements in and maintain existing car park sufficiency
- Invest in the Highways network/assets with the income generated in line with the Road Traffic Act.
- Encourage more people to visit and stay in Stockton Town Centre, supporting vibrancy and economic growth of the area.

School Catering Service

67. Local authorities are not required to provide school meals, it is a traded service. Other local authorities, including neighbouring ones, have already taken the decision to cease their school meals service, with rising costs being a common reason.

68. Due to rising costs, the existing charges made to schools and academies no longer cover the cost of the service. There is an existing annual budget pressure of £350,000 within this service.

69. The Council has continued to prioritise its school meals service to ensure that we offer healthy and nutritious options for school children in the Borough. Many of the schools and academy trusts within the Borough continue to use the Council's school meals service because of its excellent reputation.

70. The Council currently charge maintained schools based on £2.80 per meal, with a range of prices for academies based on the costs of their particular circumstances, for example geography and size. Typically, a small primary school with low pupil numbers will cost more to provide a school meal service per meal than a larger school where economies of scale can be achieved. These charges do not cover the costs of the service.

Free school meals (FSM) auto-enrolment

71. Whilst the latest Department of Education data estimates that 27.7% of pupils in the Borough are known to be eligible for FSM and all known eligible pupils are taking up this entitlement, these statistics do not account for pupils/households that are not recorded as eligible. It is therefore proposed that the Council operates an FSM auto-enrolment scheme. Using existing data held by the Council, parents/carers identified as eligible for FSM and have a child attending a state or academy school on a full time basis within the Borough will be written to and ask to 'opt out' if they prefer not to be registered. The project will be implemented in the Spring school census (which opens 16.1.25) and then re-run on a regular basis (based on the school census dates) to maximise take-up.

72. It should be noted that currently the Council offers a charged FSM eligibility checker to schools (alongside maintaining eligibility lists and dealing with school queries) which generates £31k per year, it is anticipated that this income will cease.

Recommendations and benefits

73. It is proposed to implement the new charges for all maintained schools and academies effective from January 2025. Maintained School meals would increase to £3 per head. Academy Trusts will be charged the full cost of the service being delivered, which varies depending on the size of the Trust (as highlighted in paragraph 70).
74. This will generate additional income to the Council of £300,000. The Council will recover costs of providing this traded service to Academy Trusts, however we will continue with a small subsidy for the remainder of the service.
75. FSM Auto enrolment will seek to ensure that all eligible families receive the benefit they are entitled to, all eligible children benefit from a guaranteed hot daily meal while in school, are able to access other out of school initiatives such as Holidays are Fun (HAF) and that schools secure additional Pupil Premium funding (£1,455 per primary pupil and £1,035 per secondary pupil per year).

Administration and Business Services – Courier Services

76. Progress and savings have been made following a review of mail services 2018, including deletion of first-class mail, promotion of Royal Mail's clean option and cancellation of timed deliveries. However, further opportunities were identified to introduce more efficient processes that are digital by design and informed by insight.

Plans for New Ways of Working

77. It is planned to cease the existing courier service and implement a new policy and process that aims to reduce paper mail. This can direct greater volumes of mail requiring printing through the Xentrall Design and Print 'Print to Post Service' and the Corporate Mailroom.
78. The move to the Modern.Gov Committee System has provided the facility to move to paperless agenda despatch for Councillors. Combined with the development of fit for purpose meeting rooms in Dunedin House, this improvement is planned for implementation in the coming months and could go live summer 2025.
79. These new ways of working will generate potential savings of £60,000 aligned to plans to mitigate the budget gap estimated within the budget report to Council in February 2024, at the same time as supporting our climate change priorities and improving intelligence and insight of activities to identify future transformation and efficiency opportunities.

Community Safety and Regulatory Services

80. Ensuring efficient use of resources and financial stability - following a review of the corporate senior management structure in May 2022, a number of the Council's regulatory areas were brought together under a single management structure known as Community Safety and Regulated Services. Since then, a significant amount of work has

been done consolidate our offer and improve the protection we offer to our communities.

81. The final stage of this is a review of the management structure, needed to unlock the final phase of changes with the aim of streamlining functions.

Plans for new ways of working

82. Streamlining the service management team – plans are being developed to merge the leadership of Trading Standards and Licensing together under one single Service Manager. This will drive out efficiencies in process and resources whilst improving the experience of service users by allowing us to simplify access to services.

Transformation Powering Our Future - Next Steps

83. Should the recommendations above be approved, work will commence to develop detailed delivery plans and implementation will commence in Quarter 3 2024.
84. Discovery and Design work continues on the remaining transformation reviews in Phase 1 of the Programme. Outcomes and proposals will be brought to Cabinet towards the end of 2024.

Communities Powering Our Future

85. This Mission seeks to change our relationship with communities to make sure our residents have happy, healthy lives.
86. Following Cabinet agreement of workstream activity in April 2024, progress has included:
87. Building our intelligence, skills and experience – we are continuing to learn from our communities and best practice in other areas about new ways of working that can improve outcomes across the Borough. Findings from the Residents' Survey and community conversations, alongside our work with Cormac Russell on Asset Based Community Development and the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) have given an improved understanding of the journey we need to take and is informing the Council's future approach to community led development and service design.
88. Alongside this, we have undertaken a review of commissioned services to understand potential opportunities for improved ways of working.
89. Appreciative Inquiry - we are developing a new approach and methodology for 'Let's Talk' Stockton-on-Tees. Using Appreciative Inquiry, we will work with our communities to understand what is working well and how to build on it.
90. Partnership working in communities – we are working with our network of 7 Community Partnerships to gather their views current ways of working and how this can be improved to make a difference for communities. This includes developing a shared approach with

our partners through the Place Leadership Board.

91. As part of our approach, we are looking at ways to improve our communication with communities, so they are aware of the resources available to support them.

92. The Proud to Care Campaign was launched in May 2024 and continues to receive positive feedback on social media. The campaign shares case studies of people who go the extra mile to build strong communities across our Borough. For example: Pauline Spicer from Ingleby Barwick, the 'Queen of Tea making.' Pauline volunteers every week at Thornaby Warm Welcome Social, making 60-80 cuppas every session. She helps run the Warm Welcome sessions, and in doing so, has made many new friends in the community. New case studies are being sought each week to maintain momentum and continued visibility of the campaign.

Partnerships Powering Our Future

93. This Mission seeks to ensure we are 'Stronger together.'

94. The Place Leadership Board continues to see strong engagement from partners, developing joint solutions to our shared challenges and opportunities, whilst removing organisational boundaries to meet the needs of our People and our Place. Project activity is progressing across all priority areas, including:

- Developing skills for public service, including options for shared pathways
- Building Pride in Place, including a shared campaign for National Volunteers Week in June 2024
- Support for Care Leavers, including a Single Point of Contact in partner agencies aligned to the support they can offer
- Maximising use of shared resources and aligning approaches to community development and reducing inequalities
- Exploring opportunities for Health and Social Care Integration.

95. A small group of Business Leaders are working together through a new Business Ambassadors Group. This will provide a business-led platform and support to build confidence in Stockton-on-Tees as a place to live, work and invest. The group has informed the development of a communications approach, that can be used to support the profile of businesses and supply chains in our Borough. The group is also considering business-led solutions to improve feelings of safety in our town centres and reduce inequalities by supporting people into employment.

Colleagues Powering Our Future

96. This Mission seeks to empower our colleagues to do the best they can for communities. We want to be an employer of choice where our colleagues feel valued, informed and involved in a working environment that is fit to meet the future demands of the Borough.

97. Following approval of Workforce Strategy by Cabinet in April 2024, activity is being progressed that that will support us in our Vision to have a talented and diverse workforce that is committed, engaged and empowered to deliver the Council's priorities and

ambitious Powering Our Future Programme.

- **Organisational Values and Behaviours** – workshops to develop the new values and behaviours are underway with colleagues across the organisation.
- **Communications & Engagement** – we are gathering colleague's views on communication methods. We are also exploring alternative options to the intranet. Work is underway to review how we celebrate success and work continues to further develop the Employee Networks and overall employee engagement offer.
- **Attract & Retain** – 5 Priority Areas of focus include: – Recruitment & Manager Engagement; Exit Interviews; Advertising; Corporate Offer & Employee Benefits and Apprentice & Graduate Opportunities. Following the apprenticeship recruitment process and open day in May, we have 43 new apprentices starting with the council across September and October.
- **Happy & Healthy Workforce** – employees from across the organisation are developing a new Employee Health and Wellbeing Charter and exploring how we can ensure employees are aware of the extensive Health and Wellbeing offer we have available with an emphasis on equity across all areas.
- **Workforce Planning** – we are focusing on how workforce data is accessed, analysed and presented to inform succession planning, talent management and identifying key skills needed for the future.
- **Workforce Development** – we are focusing on leadership and management development and maximising the opportunities available through the apprenticeship route for our existing workforce. E-learning modules continue to be available to all staff via "My Development" and in-person training sessions will take place on key topics on a demand led basis.
- **Smarter Working** – a number of colleagues have been relocated into the recently refurbished Dunedin House and a Smarter Working Policy and Remote Working Guidance have been published. This ensures we have supportive processes and a suitable and vibrant working environment that supports colleagues to do the job in the most efficient and smart way.

Regeneration Powering Our Future

98. Work is taking place to re-frame this Mission with a focus on Place Making. Further detail will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

99. Powering Our Future puts communities at the heart of everything we do. It will change the way we work with our communities, so they use their knowledge, skills and strengths to help them deliver positive outcomes for themselves. Not only will this save money, but it will also mean that our residents are healthy, happy and feel like they belong.

100. Our approach will:

- Empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.
- Always look for opportunities to be innovative and improve the way we work, so that we remain in the best possible financial position now and in the future.
- Ensure that if we redesign a service, we will do this in a way that minimises impact for our residents, communities and partner organisations.

101. Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments (EPIA) have been undertaken for individual reviews as required.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

102. There are no direct impacts on Corporate Parenting as a result of this report. Implications will be identified as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

103. As outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Budget Report to Council in February 2024, the Council is forecasting a budget gap across the MTFP of £1.9m in 24/25, £7.1m in 25/26 and £8.1m in 26/27.

104. The measures identified in the report above are summarised in the table below.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Waste Collection and Disposal		486	2,834
Supporting People to Live Independently at Home	250	500	500
Administration and Business Services - Courier Services		60	60
Fees and Charges - Car Parking	50	800	800
Fees and Charges - School Meals	75	300	300
Fees and Charges - Adult Social Care Cap	-	150	150
Total	375	2,296	4,644

105. The table above demonstrates positive progress towards closing the budget gap, with a lot more work still ongoing with opportunities for greater successes. A number of assumptions have been made within the modelling and financial implications contained in this report. These will be updated in future MTFP reporting and updates brought back to Cabinet.

106. The report contains prudential borrowing requirements, this is summarised in the table below:

	Amount of Borrowing	Annual Repayments	Repayment Term
	£'000	£'000	Years

Green Waste - Bins	1,000	130	10
Waste - Transfer Station – Make good	1,100	75	30
Receptacles	1,200	156	10
Car Parking - Wellington Square Resurfacing	1,000	80	20
Total	4,300	441	

107. The prudential borrowing repayments are included in the changes to budgets described above.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

108. There are no direct legal impacts as a result of this report. Implications will be identified, and legal advice sought/provided as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

RISK ASSESSMENT

109. This report provides an update on the development of the Powering Our Futures Programme. There are two main risks associated with the programme. Firstly, the programme does not achieve the levels of financial savings needed to put the Council on a financially sustainable footing. Secondly, the programme does not improve outcomes for our communities. Both these risks could lead to reputational risk.

110. To manage the risks, the Council has implemented a robust governance structure to manage the Powering Our Future programme. The structure includes senior management oversight, steering groups for each strand of the programme, clearly defined projects and programme and project management arrangements and regular reporting to Cabinet. In addition, the programme will be appropriately resourced with additional officer capacity to ensure outputs are achieved that lead to delivering the aims of the programme.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

111. Powering Our Future is a Borough-wide Programme.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Powering Our Future Programme Update (January 2024, April 2024)
- MTFP and Budget Report to Council (February 2024)
- Financial update report to Cabinet (September 2024)
- Scrutiny Review of Domestic Waste Collections, Kerbside Recycling and Green Waste to Cabinet (February 2024)
- The Environment Act 2021
- Governments 'Simpler Recycling' guidelines 2023
- SBC Anti-Poverty Strategy 2024-2027

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 17 October 2024

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

THE STOCKTON-ON-TEES PLAN 2024-2028

SUMMARY

This report provides Cabinet with the final draft of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028, for Consultation ahead of consideration by full Council in November 2024.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

This Plan marks a new direction for our organisation. It sets out a Vision for the future of our Borough, developed with the voice of our communities.

The Plan has been developed to reflect the growing pressures on communities and public services, which mean we can no longer afford to deliver services the way we have in the past. However, we are confident we can work with local stakeholders to put in place new and innovative approaches that will reshape what we do in the best interests of our residents, whilst effectively managing the resources we have.

Once approved, the Stockton-on-Tees Plan will serve as a guiding framework for the Council, along with our partners and communities, to work together towards a shared future that brings our vision to life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Stockton-on-Tees Plan (attached at Appendix 1) for stakeholder consultation
2. Approve the Stockton-on-Tees Plan (attached at Appendix 1) for recommended agreement by Council on 20 November 2024, subject to any comments received through community consultation
3. Agree that any minor amendments as the result of consultation are reviewed and agreed by the Leader of the Council, and that an overview of comments are provided to all Members of Cabinet
4. Agree that if there are any comments requiring substantive change to the draft Plan, they are brought to a future Cabinet meeting before consideration by full Council
5. Subject to approval of the Stockton-on-Tees Plan by full Council, agree that Cabinet will receive annual updates on progress and achievements. Alongside this, Select Committees will receive regular updates on progress relevant to their remit.

DETAIL

6. The Stockton-on-Tees Plan has been developed to reflect the drivers and priorities for the Council, our partners and most importantly communities.
7. A high-level analysis of data has been carried out to give us a picture of our performance and to set a baseline.
8. The voice of communities has also informed the development of a draft Vision for the Borough:

Stockton-on-Tees is home – a warm and friendly place, where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place, where everyone can grow and succeed. We work together to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

9. Five priority areas are proposed as the focus of our activity to turn our Vision into reality. These are:
 - The best start in life to achieve big ambitions
 - Healthy and Resilient Communities
 - A Great Place to Live, Work and Visit
 - An Inclusive Economy
 - A Sustainable Council

Further detail on each of these priorities can be found in Appendix 1.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

10. The Stockton-on-Tees Plan has drawn from a wide range of data and intelligence. But overall, it represents the voice of the Borough. It has been developed with communities, for communities. We've gathered intelligence from:
 - Our Residents Survey
 - Conversations with Community Groups
 - Face-to-face interviews
 - Our Viewpoint Panel.
11. Key themes from our conversation with communities, and which are reflected in the Plan are:
 - Creating a Borough to be proud of that encourages more young people to stay here
 - Creating employment opportunities and raising aspirations
 - Creating safe communities and reducing anti-social behaviour in town centres
 - Good Schools and Colleges
 - Good transport links – including cycleways & pathways
 - Joint working with communities and creating an inclusive Borough.
12. Working closely with our communities and partners will help us meet the needs of our residents and make Stockton-on-Tees a place we can all be proud of. Some examples of how we will measure success include:

- The number of children in poverty
- Educational attainment
- Feelings of belonging in communities
- Crime rates & perceptions of crime
- Satisfaction with employment & accommodation
- Employment rates & productivity.

13. Consultation with partners has taken place through the Place Leadership Board.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

The Plan's strategic priorities will support the Local Authority to deliver its statutory functions and enable it to be an effective Corporate Parent.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Stockton-on-Tees Plan is aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. Financial implications will be considered through any proposed action to deliver and approval sought at that point.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any and all legal implications will be identified through careful action planning throughout the delivery of the Plan noting, in particular, that growing pressures on communities and public services will require effective management of the Council's resources, and that, any decisions made pursuant to the Plan are also made in accordance with the law to minimise any risk of legal challenge.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Stockton-on-Tees Plan provides the vision for the future of the borough. The greatest risk associated with the Plan is that the development has not been sufficiently robust and that the wrong priorities have been identified. This risk has been mitigated by a detailed development process included considerable consultation with our communities, partners and internally with Members and officers.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

All Stockton-on-Tees wards affected.

Consultation has been carried out with councillors at the following:

- Member Engagement session (09/07/24)
- Member Engagement session (12/07/24)
- Members Briefing Session (24/09/24)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

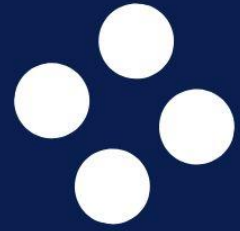
All relevant background papers are included within Appendix 1.

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STOCKTON ON TEES



POWERING OUR FUTURE THE STOCKTON- ON-TEES PLAN 2024-2028



Introduction

This is our new Council Plan. It sets out a vision for the future of our Borough, which has been developed following conversations with communities. The Council Plan is a framework that the Council, as well as our partners and communities, will use to ensure we work together towards a shared vision that brings our vision to life.

Our Vision is:

Stockton-on-Tees is home – a warm and friendly place, where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place, where everyone can grow and succeed. We work together to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

This Plan marks a new way of working for the Council. Pressures on communities and public services have been growing for some time, which mean we can no longer afford to deliver services the way we have in the past. We are confident we can work with local stakeholders to put in place new and innovative approaches that will reshape what we do in the best interests of our residents, whilst effectively managing the resources we have.

Our Council Plan also responds to the policy direction of the new Government and aligns with their priority Missions, particularly in breaking down barriers to opportunity, creating safer communities and kickstarting growth. Our co-ordinated approach to delivery will ensure that national policy and approach, supports local success.

Contents

- **Introducing our new Council Plan**
 - **Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council**
- **Executive Summary – plan on a page, showing our high level vision, priorities & measures of success (printable version)**
- **Developing the plan – with communities and for communities**
- **Picture of the Borough**
 - **Narrative – highlighting our Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges**
 - **Data & intelligence underpinning our priorities**
- **Council Plan priorities & key moves to deliver**
 - **The Best Start in Life to achieve big ambitions**
 - **Healthy and Resilient Communities**
 - **A Great Place to Live, Work & Visit**
 - **An Inclusive Economy**
 - **A Sustainable Council**
- **A framework to deliver for the Council**
 - **Powering Our Future - a Mission-based approach**
 - **Our Design Principles – underpinning our ways of working**
- **A picture of success - the outcomes we will work to achieve**

Foreword from Leader/Chief Executive

This Council Plan marks a new direction for our organisation.

We are proud to be a high performing Council, with evidence to show that we have, and will continue to make a positive difference to the lives of our communities, however, the conditions we are working in have changed and what we have done in the past won't get us to where we need to be in future.

Like most public sector organisations, the pressure on our finances is significant. At the same time, the demand for the services we provide has been rising and our costs have been increasing rapidly, especially in recent years.

Our strong and careful management means we're in a better position than some councils. However, we face some tough decisions about the way we work in future and the services we provide, or in some cases, may have to stop providing. This will mean working differently with our partners and our communities, empowering residents to do more for themselves and harnessing the strengths of our communities to achieve better outcomes for the people of Stockton-on-Tees.

We must think differently and creatively about how we respond to the challenges ahead as we strive to achieve the best for our Borough, while we carefully manage the money we have available.

This is a plan that aims to make the Borough the best place it can be over the coming decade, where we all have a part to play.

The plan sets out our key priorities and provides a unifying strategy for the whole of the Borough to make it the best possible place to live and work.

Councillor Bob Cook (Leader of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

Mike Greene (Chief Executive of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

Executive Summary – plan on a page



OUR VISION

Stockton-on-Tees is home. It's a warm and friendly place where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of the Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place where everyone can grow and succeed. We will continue to work together to reduce inequalities and barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

THE BEST START IN LIFE TO ACHIEVE BIG AMBITIONS

A safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. Working hard to prevent the impact of poverty, creating a bright and healthy future with a shared sense of belonging. Supporting children in our care and creating equality of opportunity

HEALTHY AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Building happy and healthy lives, supporting those who are experiencing poverty. Ensuring that our residents are resilient, independent

A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT

A vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy that residents can be proud of



AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Growing the local economy and cementing our role as the well-connected, economic heart of Tees Valley. Ensuring that all residents can benefit from secure and sustainable jobs

SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL

A well-run financially sustainable Council that improves outcomes for communities



WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY TO MAKE OUR VISION A REALITY

SOME OF THE THINGS WE WILL DO:

- Support children and families with early development
- Increase access to screening and immunisations
- Work with communities to manage the impact of serious and organised crime
- Progress delivery of our exciting plans for regeneration
- Encourage inward investment from companies that have good and fair operating principles
- Support our residents to access secure and sustainable employment
- Continue to deliver a balanced budget while improving outcomes for communities

SOME OF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- Get involved with our Family Hubs.
- Volunteer - see what's available at www.stocktonvolunteers.co.uk
- Use and enjoy your local town and village centres
- Use our online forms or call us to report issues such as broken streetlights, damaged street furniture and potholes
- Support local businesses and shop close to home, helping local companies to succeed
- Boost your skills by taking a course with any of the great providers in the Borough
- Share your ideas for doing things differently in your area

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:

- Our residents will feel like they belong to their community, live for longer and in good health.
- More of our children will have a good level of development and be ready for school when they reach reception age. More will achieve outstanding educational attainment and remain in education, employment and/or training at age 16, building a bright future in our Borough.
- Crime rates will reduce and more residents will feel safe at all times.
- More residents will be happy in their employment and accommodation.
- Employment rates and GVA will increase.
- We will do more with our partners and communities, recognising the part we all have to play in the future of our Borough.

Read the full plan



Developing the plan – with communities, for communities

The Council Plan is underpinned by wide range of data and intelligence. But most importantly, it represents the voice of the Borough. It has been developed with communities, for communities.

We've heard from:

- Over 1600 residents who responded to our Residents Survey;
- Over 100 residents through conversations at Community Groups;
- 72 people who joined us for face-to-face interviews; and
- 117 residents on our Viewpoint Panel.

This has given us a rich insight into the things that matter to our residents, including what's great about the place they live and what could make it better. Using the voice of communities, we have developed a shared Vision for the future of the Borough. Our Vision is:

Stockton-on-Tees is home – a warm and friendly place, where we welcome others and come together as a single community. We are a diverse and inspiring Borough, culturally rich and with confidence in a future that we can all share and be proud of. At the economic heart of Tees Valley, we are a dynamic, safe and healthy place, where everyone can grow and succeed. We work together to reduce inequalities and remove barriers to opportunity. We are Team Stockton-on-Tees.

Achieving our Vision and delivering on what residents have told us are important to them will be a shared effort. This will include the need for decisive action, support and engagement from the Council, our partners and communities themselves – **we all have a part to play.**

Our message to Communities...

You've told us the kind of place you want to live and work in, and through these conversations we know there are great strengths in your communities. We see the role of the Council, working with our partners, as empowering you to make the most of the resources and facilities in your areas, to improve your wellbeing, engagement and reduce reliance on council services. To make this a reality, we will help to leverage the existing strengths in communities to drive positive change. In this way, we can maximise the potential and capabilities you have, helping you to collaborate, co-produce and lead initiatives that will improve outcomes.

Partnerships Powering Our Future...

Working with our partners, we are stronger together. Public services across Stockton on Tees face shared challenges of decreasing budgets and increasing demand. In response, we will pull together around the needs of our communities, not drift apart into silos. We will work collaboratively to build on our strengths and seek to ensure that services are provided by the organisation or community group best placed to do so.

Each of our priorities in this Council Plan make it clear how we can all work together to unlock the full potential of communities by doing our bit for the Borough and where we all have a part to play.

Stockton on Tees – a picture of the Borough

Stockton-on-Tees is a place of contrasts and diversity. Our natural assets, industrial heritage and innovative spirit are fundamental to who we are – as a place and as communities.

The River Tees runs through our Borough, shaping lives past, present and future. It runs alongside Georgian-fronted market squares, nature reserves, spectacular bridges and unforgettable industrial architecture. Our Borough sits between striking landscapes and a stunning coastline, all within easy reach of key centres across Yorkshire and the North East, including Newcastle, York and Leeds.

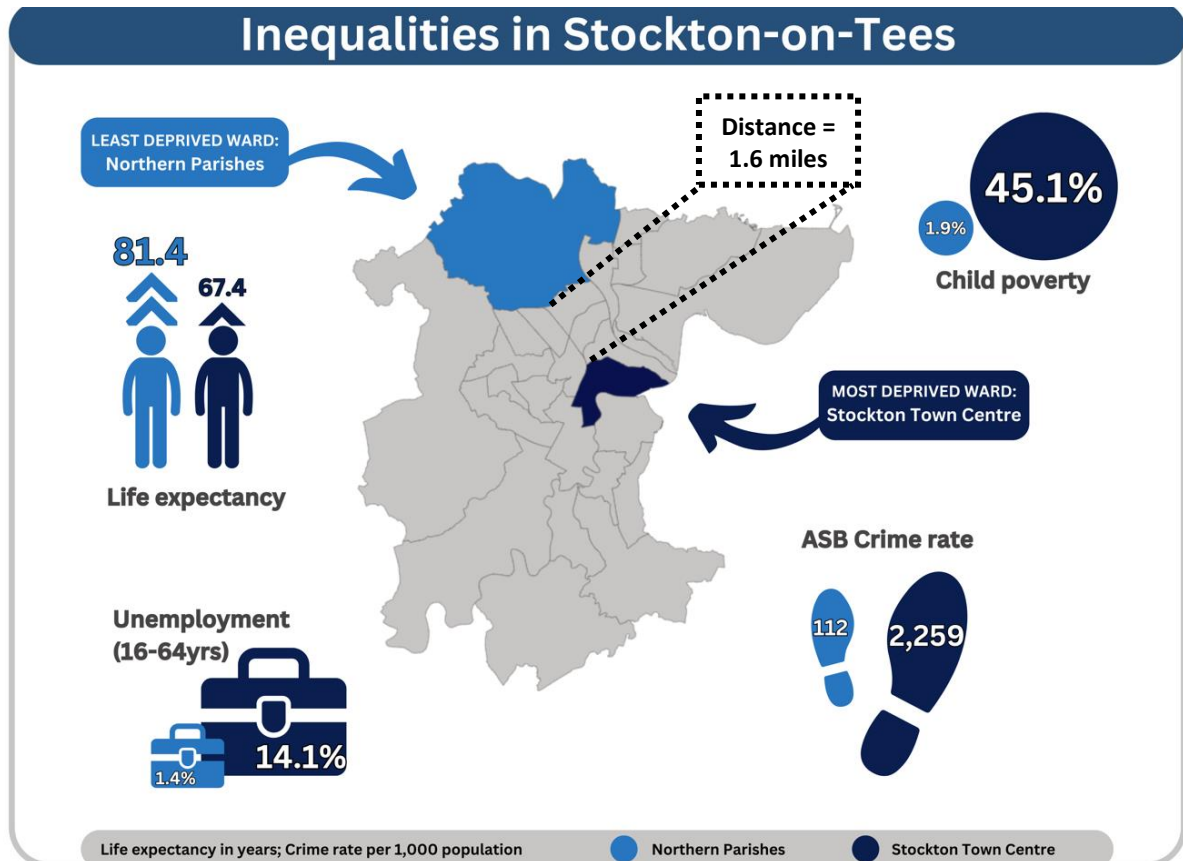
We are the largest Borough in the Tees-Valley with approximately 200,000 residents, making up a diverse and welcoming community, with a strong sense of community spirit.

Our Borough is a place with:

- Some of the warmest, friendliest and most welcoming people in the country.
- Entrepreneurial energy and economic potential – we have highly productive companies and high quality jobs across a number of dynamic sectors, including: chemicals, engineering, environmental technologies, life sciences and digital technologies, as well as a vibrant voluntary sector.
- A fantastic and mixed housing offer, from starter properties to high end executive homes, all at a good level of affordability and served by high quality schools and local services.
- A cultural epicentre, that serves the whole region with an incredible calendar of events, great leisure facilities, plus hugely important cultural assets like The Globe, Billingham Forum Theatre, ARC and Preston Park Museum.
- On top of all this, we have big ambitions for our future and a dynamic approach to Place Leadership and building aspirations, working with our partners.

Opportunities and Challenges

We are a highly polarised Borough – one of the most polarised in the country - where affluent areas sit alongside places of significant deprivation. High value business and residential areas are in close proximity to many social and economic challenges, that affect the opportunities and life chances of a large proportion of our residents.



The **challenges** we face to reduce inequality and disadvantage are many and varied, however as we take a proactive approach and work together with our partners and communities to overcome and address them, they are not insurmountable.

- Our unemployment rate is higher than the national average and child poverty in the Borough is prevalent, with 1-in-4 children in Stockton-on-Tees living in poverty, rising to 1-in-2 children in some areas of the Borough. Attracting investment and creating jobs will continue to be the focus of the Council to increase opportunity and lift families out of poverty.
- Although crime rates in Stockton-on-Tees are higher than the national average, we have seen some improvements in crime reduction. We are successfully working together with our public sector partners and the voluntary sector to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in high crime rate areas, where we are giving residents opportunities to come together and be involved in shaping their area.

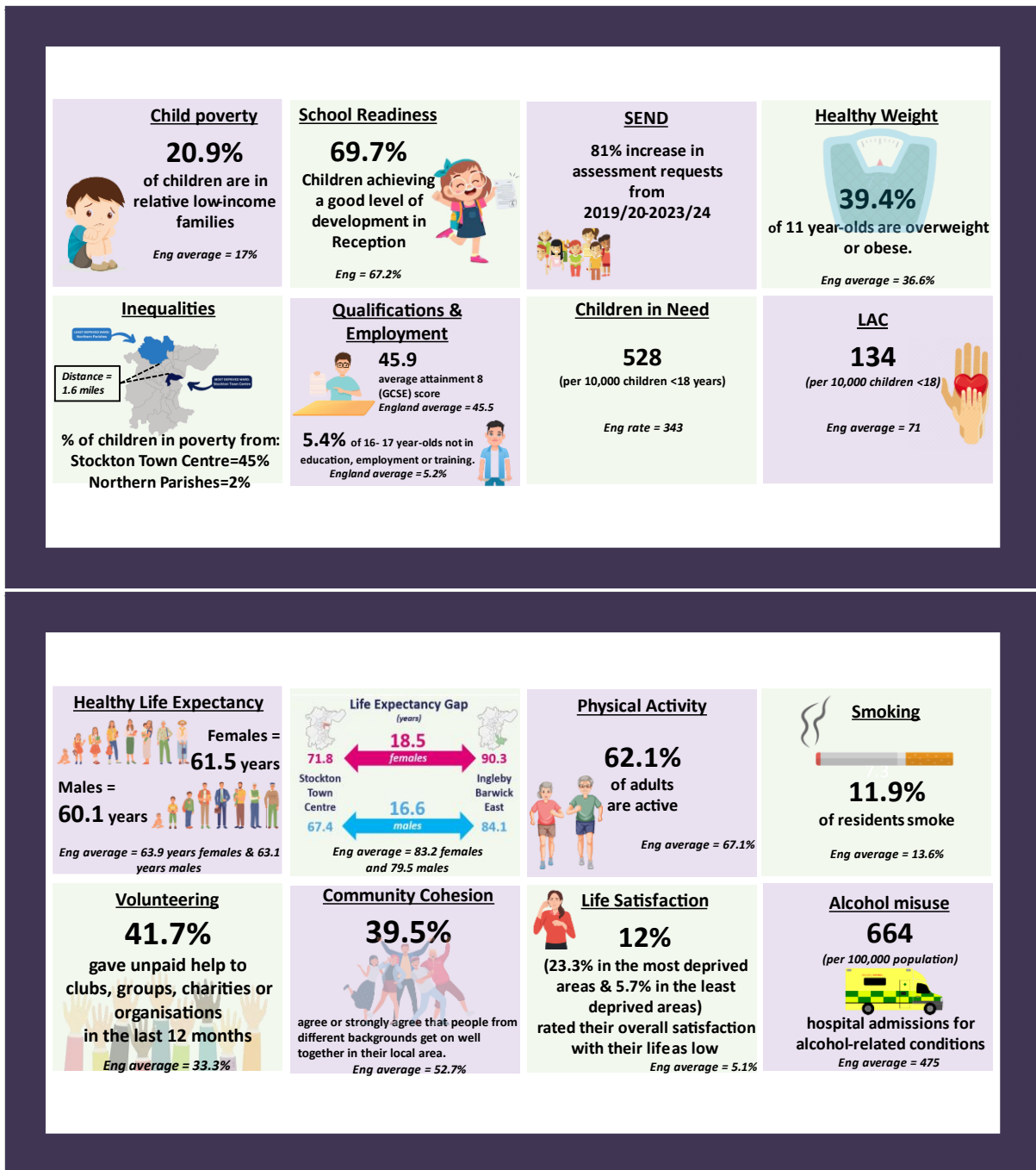
- More than one third of our wards are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country and there is a gap of almost 19 years in average life expectancy for females between Stockton Town Centre ward and Ingleby Barwick East ward. Addressing this starts early, and we have associated challenges around levels of exercise and chronic illness. We're committed to fighting this discrepancy and making sure all people enjoy a healthy and happy life in Stockton-on-Tees.

We have **strong foundations** to build on as we work towards delivering our ambitions.

- We are a well-managed council in strong financial health with an excellent track record of delivery. As the economic centre of Tees Valley, with high value clusters and a higher economic output than large northern cities, we are ideally placed to attract investment to grow our business base and our local economy, increasing opportunities for our residents.
- We have a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector, and strong communities that are committed to supporting each other. The number of people who give their time through volunteering sits way above the national average. Alongside this, we have an extensive programme of council activity to break down barriers to opportunity. Our Fairer Stockton-on-Tees commitment and Anti-Poverty Strategy are tackling inequalities and ensuring that we deliver targeted support, including around health inequalities and emotional health and well-being.
- Digital technologies have, and continue to change the way we all live, work and access services. We are a digitally strong borough, sitting well above the national average for Ultrafast broadband coverage, and the number of residents who access the internet. One third of the digital sector in Tees Valley is also located in Stockton-on-Tees – giving us a strong platform for further growth.
- We have high levels of confidence in our town centres and a supply of appropriate brownfield land to be developed, that won't impact on the availability of green space. Our vision for a Care and Health Innovation Zone, along with our excellent transport assets can act as a springboard for investment, increasing economic growth and opportunities for residents.
- As a creative and dynamic events Borough and a place where people want to visit, our thriving cultural offer attracts thousands of visitors each year. Our packed and diverse events programme also provides opportunities for communities to come together, enhancing community cohesion, building pride in place and a sense of belonging.
- We have access to lots of high quality, open green spaces for people to enjoy and for biodiversity to thrive, supporting active and healthy lifestyles through engagement in sport, leisure and options to travel by walking and cycling.


This Plan builds upon our fantastic assets and a strong record of success, whilst also recognising the challenges facing our communities and our economy.

Below is an overview of our key economic statistics...



Housing

84.4%
are satisfied with their accommodation



Eng average = 85.1%

Events

110,000
The number of visitors to Stockton-on-Tees each year to attend our events.

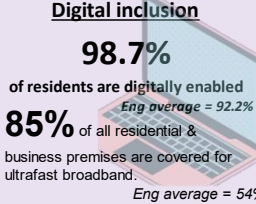


SIRF
SIRF 2023 brought £1.7m into the Borough

Digital inclusion

98.7%
of residents are digitally enabled
Eng average = 92.2%

85% of all residential & business premises are covered for ultrafast broadband.
Eng average = 54%



Crime


111
(per 1,000 population) offences recorded



9% decrease on previous year

Environment


82.5%
have made some or a lot of changes to their lifestyle to help tackle environmental issues



Eng average = 85.1%

Environment

Over 1100 hectares of publicly-owned green space, with 6% actively managed for biodiversity



Community Safety

52%
feel safe walking alone in their local area after dark



Eng average = 79.4%

Recycling

25.2%
of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting





Eng average = 41.3%

Qualifications

8.7%
have no qualifications
Eng average = 6.5%

29.5%
have a level 4 qualification or above
Eng & Wales average = 33.8%






Employment

63.4%
of residents are satisfied with their current job
Eng average = 69.6%


Unemployment

4.7%
of residents are currently unemployed. *Eng average = 3.9%*

Income


£25,000
is the median income for Stockton-on-Tees residents



Eng average = £26,600

Finances

21%
of residents said that have difficulty managing their finances



Eng average = 6.5%

Businesses

One-third
Of the Tees Valley economy is in Stockton-on-Tees

Digital Businesses

One-third
Of Tees Valley's digital businesses are in Stockton-on-Tees



Productivity

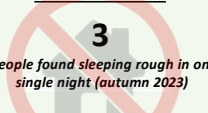
£42.60
Gross value added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy



*Eng average = £38.41
Tees Valley average = £29.50*

Homelessness

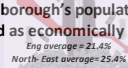
3
People found sleeping rough in one single night (autumn 2023)



North-East average = 7.41

Economic Inactivity

27.0%
of the borough's population are classed as economically inactive



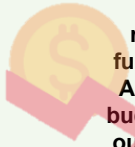
*Eng average = 21.4%
North-East average = 25.4%
23.1% economically inactive due to ill health
Eng average = 26.3%*

The Council has consistently delivered a balanced budget

‘Stockton Council is in strong financial health’ Mazars (External Auditors Nov 2023)

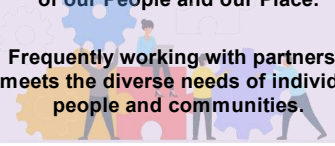


39% reduction to our funding since 2010. Alongside growing budget pressures for our public services



Place Leadership Board established to work together to meet the needs of our People and our Place.

Frequently working with partners to meet the diverse needs of individual people and communities.



Planned approach to reduce the budget gap and reshape what we do for the better through the Powering Our Future Programme



£9 million budget gap over 3 years



75% reduction in carbon emissions since 2010



Priorities and Key Moves to deliver

We have identified a set of inter-connected priorities and Key Moves that will ensure we work together to overcome our Borough's challenges and achieve our shared vision for our communities.

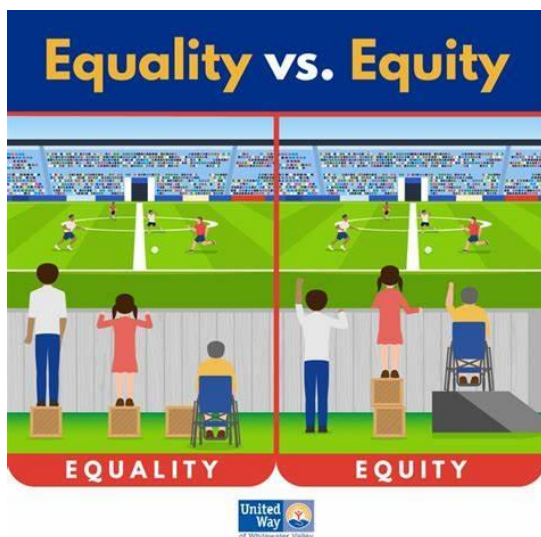
To fully realise these, we will all have a part to play.

Central to everything we do is creating a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing the inequality that exists across the Borough, while improving the health and wellbeing of communities.

Creating a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing inequality

Our Council Plan builds on the [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework \(2021-2031\)](#) - an ambitious call to action to address the complex issues that can impact quality of life, life chances and life expectancy.

We recognise that a diverse set of responses are required to ensure equity, based on the needs of individuals. As such, we will listen to the needs expressed by individuals and be mindful not to oversimplify. We will also use data and intelligence to make sure we target our activity at the areas of greatest need. This is critical to ensure fairness in communities, and to give all of our children the best start in life.



Improving population health outcomes

We will focus on interventions in three inter-connected areas, those at a **civic level** (by this we mean the matters controlled by central and local government, such as regulations, fiscal measures, welfare and communication campaigns), alongside those that are **community-based** and **service-based**.

Each of these can make their own impact on health and wellbeing, however we will seek to ensure that together, their impact is greater than the sum of their individual parts. We will do this through a co-ordinated approach to policy setting and delivery using the [Population Intervention Triangle toolkit | Local Government Association](#) approach, which will also support our work around early Intervention and Prevention.

Further detail about our ways of working can also be found in our Design Principles.

Priority 1: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions

We will support all children to have the best possible start in life, within a safe and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. We will work hard to prevent children and families from experiencing the impact of poverty, creating a bright and healthy future with a shared sense of belonging. We will support children in our care, as part of our approach to create equality of opportunity for all children and young people in the Borough.

Key Moves

Giving Children and Young People the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive.

We will ensure that all children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential through our early years, health and wellbeing, childcare and education system. We recognise communities that seek to improve the health and development of its children, are helping to build strong foundations for future economic growth and prosperity and happy, healthy and nurturing families.

For children in the earliest years of life, prevention and early intervention will focus on strengthening relationships and connections – between parents and their children, the wider community and the services that provide help and support in communities. In doing so, we will support our early years providers, schools and wider teams to collaborate fully, to ensure that quality and inclusivity are at the heart of everything we do. This will ensure that all children and families thrive and develop skills for life. As set out in our [Best Start in Life Strategy](#), we will also:

- Support children and families with the development of early speech, language and communication, while supporting families to provide a positive and healthy home learning environment.
- Encourage access to high quality, inclusive and affordable Early Years education and increase the provision of childcare settings to enable more working parents to access free childcare.
- Support schools to provide wraparound services before and after school, alongside enrichment activities that promote healthy and active lives.
- Ensure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have their needs met, and that we are a Borough where everyone is included regardless of their need, background or vulnerability. In doing so, we will aim to provide support for children in a local school or setting (where possible) without the need to travel long distances to have their needs supported.
- Working with our partners, we will support good attendance, reduce exclusions and make attendance a priority. We will take a targeted approach to engage with families in a school setting and bring appropriate services together that enable children and young people to access school with support that allows them to thrive.
- We will work with Schools and Post-16 providers to increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training at ages 16-18 years, helping to grow their ambitions and meeting the needs of local employers.

A safe community for all children and young people

We will develop our partnership approach to address serious youth violence and build feelings of safety for all Children and Young People.

We will take a Child First approach, as set out in the [Youth Justice Plan](#), which will see us:

- Prioritise the interests of children, including their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential.
- Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their social involvement, leading to safer communities and fewer victims.
- Encouraging children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.
- Promoting a childhood removed from the justice system, using prevention and diversion.

Preventing children and families from experiencing the impact of poverty and taking a targeted approach to reduce the number of children in poverty.

We will address the emerging issues at home and in school that directly affect children, young people and their families or carers. This will include:

- Maximising free school meals take up and ensuring that the council's school meal provision offers healthy and nutritious options for a balanced diet.
- Implementing a school uniform affordability action plan and the targeted promotion of Healthy Starts Vouchers to increase take up amongst eligible families.
- Continuing to deliver our Holidays Are Fun programme in partnership with the VCSE. Providing activities and healthy meals during school holidays.
- Continue to bring together key stakeholders from across our Borough as a network to address issues relating to our children who maybe in poverty.

Support for Children in Our Care

As Corporate Parents, we are committed to supporting the children we care for and care leavers to have happy and healthy childhoods, achieve their full potential and have a successful adulthood. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out how we will do this by focusing on Safe and Stable Homes, built on love – where children and young people feel safe, secure and cared for. Specifically, we will focus on:

- Providing opportunities to achieve and progress in education, employment and training.
- Creating connections and building communities through networks with opportunities to participate and have fun.
- Supporting children and young people to share their views, wishes and feelings and ensuring we listen, feedback and take action.
- Promoting healthy lives through physical and emotional health and wellbeing - now and in the future.
- Preparing and supporting our care experienced young people for adult lives.
- Supporting and advocating for our children and young people and challenging others to do the same.

A bright future and a sense of belonging

We will support all of our children and young people to have high aspirations for their future in our Borough and to have fulfilled lives. This will take place through our high-quality education settings, alongside a range of sport, leisure and cultural opportunities for children and families. We will also help our young people to explore opportunities across different employment sectors and build a positive, meaningful future for themselves in the Borough.

For our children and young people with complex needs and who need additional support, we will ensure there is a shared responsibility to develop and implement a 'Preparing for Adulthood' pathway. This will support young people during their transition, ensuring that agencies work together so they can move through life stages as seamlessly as possible.

Young people will also have their voice heard and be involved in making a difference, for example through Bright Minds Big Futures (BMBF) which is an award-winning youth-led movement, working together with us to make the Borough a great place to grow up in.

We all have a part to play... how can you help give our children and young people the best start in life?

The support of a strong community can create a nurturing environment that has a profound effect on children's wellbeing and development, laying the foundations for a bright future. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Get involved with our Family Hubs in Billingham, Redhill, Stockton and Thornaby to support and benefit from advice, activity sessions, parenting workshops and much more.
- Volunteer with the Independent Visitors Scheme to spend time with young people in our care who would benefit from a friendship with an adult who can offer support, role model qualities and share in doing fun activities with time away from their placement.
- Encourage school attendance and help increase attainment for the young people in your life, perhaps become a School Governor to ensure high standards of achievement across the Borough's schools.
- Encourage and support children to play and keep moving, making the best use of our leisure services and outdoor spaces.
- Encourage and support students aged 16-18 in the Borough, and raise awareness of the local opportunities available to them as they enter the world of work.

Priority 2: Healthy & Resilient Communities

We will ensure that our diverse communities can live happy and healthy lives, and that we support those who are experiencing poverty. We will strive to ensure that our residents are resilient, independent and where ever possible, economically active. We will support residents to be safe and connected to each other in their homes and communities.

Key Moves

Ensuring Happy and Healthy lives for all, we will work hard to reduce health inequalities.

We recognise that health inequalities are mostly shaped by the social determinants of health, and we will be proactive in addressing this by focusing action on the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. This will include a preventative approach to support healthy lives and communities, and for those experiencing complex and multiple needs, we will look for all opportunities to better coordinate and deliver holistic support and care.

Through delivery of our [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) and the [Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework \(2021-2031\)](#), we will improve physical and mental health support and shape local places that give people the best possible chance to be healthy. We will work alongside our diverse communities to understand their strengths, where they need support, and how to appropriately tailor this support.

Working with partners and communities to improve and build health, we will:

- Support all children and families to have the best start in life, for example by ensuring access to health and wellbeing support as early as possible.
- Ensure everyone can access a healthy standard of living, for example providing support for skills, education and training to give people better access to job opportunities, particularly for communities facing barriers such as those living with a disability or long-term health condition.
- Support everyone to live in healthy and sustainable places and communities, for example ensuring that our public realm (including town and village centres, parks, nature reserves and connecting pathways) supports active and healthy lifestyles. This includes incentivising safe and accessible options for active travel, as well as involvement with sport and physical activity.
- Helping everyone live long and healthy lives, for example increasing access to screening and immunisations and creating the conditions and support for healthy lives through tackling harm from alcohol and drug misuse and smoking.

Working with our residents to build resilience and independence in their own homes

We want to support more of our residents to remain in their own homes for longer, and we will work with individuals to co-produce support plans, focussing on the things they want to achieve in their daily lives. Alongside this, we will work with providers to ensure that all services received by our residents are good quality, safe and reliable.

We recognise the invaluable role that carers play to support their loved ones in communities, and we will ensure they receive the support they need to maintain their own independence and wellbeing.

Our work with communities will strengthen resilience through evidence-based public health initiatives, fostering community networks and supporting education on emergency preparedness, including the health and environmental effects of the climate change emergency as well as future pandemics. Communities most likely to be negatively impacted will be prioritised and we will seek to build on factors that promote good health and wellbeing and prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support.

Building safe and connected communities

We will take all opportunities to embed co-production into our ways of working to build strong and connected communities. Through our Communities Mission, we will empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, whilst, respecting the rights of local communities to get involved as much or as little as they are able or wish to. This will include close working with our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.

Our approach will see us work with communities to tackle the contributing causes to social isolation and loneliness and encouraging and facilitating more ways to connect within the community, whilst providing support for people at greatest risk and promoting good mental wellbeing.

We will also ensure that our communities are better connected. Working with transport partners, we will ensure that the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan supports social equity through good connectivity across all modes of travel, that it promotes safety and security for all.

We will continue to work with our partners through the Safer Stockton Partnership, to make Stockton-on-Tees a safer place, where people are protected from serious harm and live in communities that are safe and welcoming. We will take an intelligence-led, neighbourhood-based approach to manage the impact of serious and organised crime. Alongside this, we will reduce offending rates of the most prolific offenders and address issues of serious violence. Our close work with communities will ensure that we protect the most vulnerable, identifying those at risk and preventing them from being drawn into harm, whilst pursuing and prosecuting those who exploit the vulnerable.

Supporting those who are experiencing poverty and work with communities to reduce the impact of poverty

Living in poverty can prevent our residents reaching their potential and can impact on people's educational attainment, employment, civic engagement and their health and wellbeing.

Through our [Anti-Poverty Strategy](#), we will support those directly affected by poverty by offering opportunities, support, advice, and information. We recognise that achieving our goal will not be quick or easy, nor is it something we can do alone. Our shared ambition is one which places both our communities and partners at the core of our delivery plan. It will see us focus our efforts on tackling food insecurity and poverty, reducing fuel poverty and supporting income maximisation. We will also ensure that we undertake Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) where required to ensure that we have an evidence-based approach which analyses the impact on groups with different characteristics, including poverty.

[We all have a part to play... how can you help build healthy and resilient communities?](#)

We all have a stake in ensuring our communities are places where people can live happily and healthily at every stage of life, and there are many ways you can do your bit, from supporting those experiencing ill-health or reducing social isolation of vulnerable people, to maintaining your own active lifestyle. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Engage with organisations such as [Cultivate Tees Valley](#) to work on a community garden that boosts food security and helps improve mental health by working outside together outside together.
- Volunteer with clean-up and litter picking groups in your area, and meet new, like minded friends.
- Make the most of active amenities across the borough, like Tees Active Centres, Shape The Play for football inspired fitness and well-being, ParkPlay for fun and games for all ages.
- Offer your time to transport someone who needs to access medical appointments or social groups through the [Volunteer Driver Scheme](#)
- Know your neighbours - especially those who may be vulnerable, and advise them on the help that's available through local initiatives such as: [Warm Homes Healthy People](#), [Community Spaces](#) or [The Bread and Butter Thing](#).

Priority 3: A Great Place to Live, Work and Visit

We will make Stockton-on-Tees a great place to live, work and visit - a Borough that residents can be proud of. It will be a vibrant and diverse place with an environment that is well looked after and outdoor spaces to enjoy.

We want Stockton-on-Tees to be a place of choice for younger generations to live, work, play and grow - providing an environment where they can thrive. Creating a great place to live will include an emphasis on children and young people growing up feeling safe, utilising green spaces and building their ambitions around exciting and fulfilled lives in our Borough.

Key Moves

Our Borough will be a place to be proud of, for communities and business

We will focus on Place Making and working with communities to improve the places and spaces that impact people's lives, including:

- Delivery of the Central Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint to create inspiring and attractive public spaces and facilities, including the Stockton Waterfront Urban Park, renovated historic Town Hall, alongside a vibrant and distinct retail offer and fresh opportunities to live, work and enjoy right at the heart of our Borough.
- Delivering the masterplan for Billingham to transform the town centre, providing a new residential community, alongside quality public realm that is connected to a revitalised retail area, and linking residents better with enhanced leisure and sports facilities including the new Billingham Sports Hub.
- Delivering our vision for a Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone, which will become a nationally significant site, offering improved infrastructure for health services, medical and social care innovation, with integrated employment and housing offers.
- Implementing the Thornaby Town Deal aspirations and rejuvenating Thornaby Town Centre, including: new leisure facilities, a redeveloped Golden Eagle site and revitalised housing that is accessible and affordable. We will also strengthen links to our other towns and promote active lifestyles through improved cycling and walking routes, alongside delivery of world class engineering and construction training facilities in partnership with NETA Training.
- Maintaining and improving our beautiful local heritage and cultural assets by enhancing historic Yarm High Street's public spaces and enriching its cultural and leisure offer through major improvement and museum extension works at Preston Park.

A vibrant and diverse place – the playground of the Tees Valley

We have a strong reputation for delivering distinctive, creative and varied events that contribute to our community and economic ambitions. The notion that Stockton-on-Tees is 'an events Borough' has been established over 30 years. It carries the passions and beliefs of our communities, connecting the six towns and connecting generations, cultures and backgrounds to celebrate together, promoting a sense of pride and togetherness. Our festivals and events improve well-being and can be a source of inspiration, a way to learn, grow and build confidence and make new friendships.

To further develop our reputation as a lively and dynamic Borough, that becomes the 'Playground of the Tees Valley' and where people's quality of life is enriched, we will:

- Continue to grow our reputation as a leading presenter of world class outdoor street arts, including international artists and premiere shows.
- Curate a programme of nationally significant largescale events, including the activation and animation of the River Tees and Stockton Waterfront.
- Empower and enable events across our Borough which unite and connect people and our communities, promoting acceptance and respect and building stronger communities through the delivery of local events and celebrations.
- Grow and attract new visitors to the Borough generating direct economic impact in terms of visitor spend and trading, changing perceptions about our Borough and helping us create a compelling offer for inward investment.
- Create exceptional events and exciting experiences, that are inclusive, relevant and diverse and which provide opportunities for participation and volunteering for residents, communities and groups.
- Maximise use of our sport and leisure facilities, including those that offer something different and attract visitors from further afield, such as Tees Barrage International White Water Centre and Air Trail.

A great place to live and call home

We will continue to work with our partners to inform delivery of the Tees Valley Strategic Transport Plan and ensure that the transport network supports inclusivity and creates ease of movement between town centres, places of work, leisure and interest. This will include enhancing the active travel offer, to promote more cycling and walking as a practical choice for everyday journeys, as well as improving bus priority and train station facilities.

We will support the development of aspirational and affordable homes that meet the needs of our residents, set within attractive locations and surrounded by enviable local services.

As part of our approach to support vibrant and healthy communities, we will take advantage of opportunities to make best use of green space, improve energy efficiency and air quality. This will include working with developers and other partners to influence design and delivery, as well as raising awareness about the health impacts of poor air quality and promoting behaviours that can have a positive impact.

Reducing crime and perceptions of crime are crucial in creating great places to live. We will identify those areas with the highest instances of anti-social behaviour and work with perpetrators, as well as communities to support behaviour change and take appropriate action against all persistent offenders. We will also work with businesses to promote safe and welcoming environments that support their companies and their workers to thrive in the Borough.

An environment that is well looked after, with outdoor spaces to enjoy and connect local amenities

We will support an environment that communities want to look after and enjoy, including clean streets, well maintained buildings and green spaces. Our open spaces will be attractive and accessible, including public realm in our town centres, as well as our parks, cemeteries, nature reserves and other grounds. We will support approaches to enhance and maintain these areas for communities to enjoy and keep active. Our approach will also be environmentally sustainable, as we care for our wider environment and enhance biodiversity, as part of our approach to adapt to the impact of climate change.

Promoting active travel will be integral to our approach. We will reduce the barriers that stop people from choosing to travel actively to work and town centres; delivering improvements in walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure that will support active travel.

We will progress a transformation review of Waste Services, to enable changes that are efficient and sustainable, reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill and supporting an increase in recycling. Our approach aligns with national policy and the [Tees Valley Joint Waste Management Strategy](#), which can maximise environmental benefits and resources from waste.

We all have a part to play... how can you help create a great place to live, work and visit?

Our Borough has a long and proud history of community spirit, where residents care about the places and spaces they live, and regularly make active contributions. For example by supporting community safety, caring for your area and much more. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our Key Moves for this priority and help make our Vision a reality:

- Present your bin, recycling and green waste in the right way and in a timely fashion to help our Community Services teams keep our streets clean.
- Encourage participation by spreading the word about events, activities and community groups to your friends, family and neighbours when chatting or on social media.
- Embrace active travel options, especially for shorter journeys – these are better for the environment, whilst also helping to stay fit and healthy.
- Take steps to insulate your home, or look out for information and support that can help with home energy efficiency.
- Be proud of Stockton-on-Tees. Talk about and share the success stories of the Borough and its people to showcase Stockton-on-Tees as a great place to live, work and visit.

Priority 4: An inclusive economy

We will continue to grow the economy of Stockton-on-Tees and cement our role as the well-connected, economic heart of the Tees Valley. We will ensure that all of our residents can benefit from secure and sustainable economic opportunities.

Our long-term approach will encourage sustained economic growth across the Borough, and a more equitable distribution of the wealth that we generate. We will focus equally on economic growth, inclusivity and skills development, through a complementary set of themes that develop new economic roles with well paid, good quality jobs, to ensure we become a place recognised for good work, fair pay and responsible business ownership.

Key Moves

Delivering and sustaining economic growth.

We will rapidly grow and broaden the employment, business, skills and enterprise base. Our interventions will help businesses to grow faster and to better innovate, whilst also developing new economic roles and functions in Stockton-on-Tees.

We will encourage inward investment from companies that have good and fair operating principles, with benefits to the Borough through the creation of well paid jobs. We will work with businesses to maximise their local impact through their company commitments to things like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental Social and Governance criteria (ESG) and the growing B-Corp movement that seeks to increase the positive impact companies make on workers, communities, customers and the planet.

Through our communications messaging and activity we will work closely with our partners to change the image and investor perceptions of Stockton-on-Tees so we can grow the Borough's profile as a place to live, work and invest.

Ensuring all of our residents can benefit from economic opportunities by delivering and embedding a fairer distribution of wealth.

Stockton-on-Tees will be recognised place of good work and fair pay. We will strive to ensure that as many employers as possible offer safe and supportive workplaces, that promote and support staff health and wellbeing.

We will support our residents to access secure and sustainable employment, by helping them to develop and make the most of their skills. We will focus efforts on communities that have more prevalent issues with lower skills and lower wages, as well as people facing barriers to employment, such as those living with a disability or those with long term health conditions.

We will work with our local companies to increase their positive impact on local communities, the local environment and supply chains, ensuring that more wealth is retained here and circulates locally. Stockton-on-Tees will be recognised place of responsible business and local ownership.

We will also build on community strengths and grow resilience, by helping to put more economic assets in the hands of our local communities and by encouraging communities to invest and spend with local companies to promote growth.

Cementing our role as the well-connected, economic heart of Tees Valley.

We will work with our partners to deliver our shared strategic transport priorities, including improved connectivity and enhanced infrastructure for our residents, workers and visitors. This will include: new and improved railway stations and providing attractive options for active travel through cycleways and pathways.

Our highway infrastructure will be well maintained, so road users can move around with ease and ensure inward investment continues to flourish. We will also work with communities and providers to increase the use of public transport and ensure options are available that promote inclusion by meeting the needs of communities.

We will maximise our digital strengths, ensuring that digital infrastructure and skills are an enabler for growth across all sectors. This will see us make the most of our high levels of ultrafast broadband and digital inclusion across the borough. We will also build on our established digital cluster, and harness expertise to develop new innovations in care-tech and health-tech that support delivery of our ambitions for a Care and Health Innovation Zone.

We all have a part to play... How can you support the continued growth of an Inclusive Economy?

There's a big role to play for all of us, by promoting our Borough as a place where business, innovation and careers can thrive, and where there's an expectation of equity and fairness. Here are just some of the things you can do to support our key moves for this priority and help make our vision a reality:

- Support local businesses and shop close to home, helping local companies to succeed, create job opportunities and increase the impact of the 'Stockton-on-Tees £'.
- Become a Stockton-on-Tees Business Ambassador, and talk up your town with confidence and pride, using some of the tools provided by the Council and our partners.
- Boost your skills and knowledge by taking a course with any of the great providers operating across the Borough, this might support your future employment or lead you to a new hobby to enjoy with like-minded people.
- If you run a business, explore Social Responsibility opportunities that will mutually benefit your business, local people and the environment.
- Think about starting your own business, in an area that supports your community or local supply chain. There's lots of support available from [Financial assistance and support for business - Stockton-on-Tees Borough / Council](https://www.investstocktonontees.co.uk/business-growth)

Priority 5: A Sustainable Council

We will ensure our council is financially sustainable and manages our assets effectively to enhance their local impact. We will be a well-run council across areas of our business and continue to improve outcomes for communities.

Key Moves

External auditors have recognised us as a well-managed council that consistently delivers a balanced budget, a position we will maintain.

Our bold and ambitious Transformation Mission, delivered as part of the Powering Our Future programme is key to achieve this. A focus on Early Intervention and Prevention will see us create the conditions for people in the Borough to be healthy and maximise their potential, by providing support for them in the right place and at the right time. Our approach will prevent, reduce and delay demand for services. In doing so, we will move away from reactive and fragmented support, whilst enhancing joined up working between public services, communities and individuals. Over time, we will shift the balance of Council resources upstream towards activities that tackle the root causes of more complex issues for individuals and families.

Alongside new ways of working and configuration of services, our Transformation Programme will maximise council income, for example through fees and charges. This will enable a balanced budget, whilst also being more sustainable for communities.

The Council's land and property portfolio will be optimised for community benefit and income generation, recognising the increasing need for financial and environmental sustainability. We will ensure that all council assets are suitable for delivering the services that communities need or contribute to the financial stability of the council. A Corporate Property Review will strategically assess assets to optimise their use, deliver financial savings and generate new income streams.

As an anchor institution in the Borough, the Council has a significant impact through our role as an employer, commissioner and purchaser of goods and services. In-keeping with our commitments set out in the Fairer Stockton on Tees Framework, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy, we will ensure that we continue to operate in ways that are fair, equitable and promote a positive local impact. This will include reducing our energy demand and accelerating a shift towards sustainable energy, whilst reducing harmful emissions and working towards a cleaner environment – for example maximising the use of solar power at the Council's new offices in Dunedin House and looking at alternative fuels to power council fleet.

We will also continue to lead by example, encouraging other organisations in the Borough to maximise their local impact.

We all have a part to play... how can you help us to be a sustainable council that has a positive impact across all parts of the Borough?

While the onus is on us to deliver this priority, there are also things communities can do to help us. Here are some of the things you might want to consider:

- Volunteer with community schemes that interest you, the more people we have involved means the more of us that have an active stake in the development of services and the future of our Borough.

- Think about contacting us online if you can, this costs the Council less money and frees up our resources to help more vulnerable residents who need face-to-face contact most.
- Use our online reporting platform to make us aware of issues at an early stage, so we can address any issues before they get worse.
- Look at ways to reduce our energy demand and support a positive natural environment when using council buildings and public spaces, this will help reduce harmful emissions whilst supporting a more sustainable environment.
- You know your communities and your place best, so please share your ideas for doing things differently in your area – thinking about opportunities for community action or ownership.

Powering Our Future – a new Mission Statement and Design Principles for the Council

To ensure we are set up to achieve the priorities in this plan, we have developed a new, cross-cutting Mission Statement for the Council to Power Our Future.

Our **Mission Statement** is:

- We will be a bold, brave and innovative Council.
- Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place where everyone is proud to live and work, and where our communities flourish and people feel they belong.
- We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.

Our Mission Statement is underpinned by 5 supporting Missions, that provide a high level picture of success:

Communities Powering Our Future - we will empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.

Place-Making Powering Our Future - we will lead the renewal of our six towns where it's needed, and work with communities on the improvements they want to see, to ensure they are vibrant spaces that attract residents, shoppers, leisure visitors and businesses.

Partnerships Powering Our Future – we will collaborate with other organisations for the benefit of our residents and communities.

Transformation Powering Our Future - we will improve the way we work and deliver efficient, effective and value for money services within available financial resources.

Colleagues Powering Our Future – we will enable and empower our workforce to do the best they can for our communities.

A set of **Design Principles** will act as 'guard rails' for the Council and be embedded across our ways of working to deliver our Mission Statement and Council Plan priorities. They are:

Reduce inequality and prioritise prevention

We talk to and listen to people to understand their needs, prioritising tackling the causes of inequality rather than tackling its effects.

For example... *Extensive consultation with the travelling community has informed the development and delivery of a new on-site Community Hub and the bespoke services they can access there, including health advice and services, employment advice and welfare rights.*

Put communities at the heart of everything we do

The starting point for developing any new project or designing a service is always our communities and we make sure everything we do is planned with their best interests at the forefront.

For example... *We use data and insights to understand the customer when re-designing a service and test prototype designs with them for feedback on how we can make them better, such as with the Making it Real Board in Adult Services.*

Enable communities to help and support each other

There are a lot of talented individuals and groups in our Borough who work together to deliver much of the activity and support our communities need. We continuously look for opportunities to encourage this and acknowledge that we aren't always best placed to provide the support an individual or community needs - where this is the case, we work with partners and help others to do this.

For example... *Community support networks are designed into our support and referral services.*

Have a 'place-based' approach

We work closely with our partners to deliver services that help make our Borough a better place to live, work and visit. We coordinate activity which contributes to good quality that is accessible and affordable; environmental sustainability; a growing economy, and a thriving leisure and culture offer.

For example... *We involve communities in deciding how best to invest in their neighbourhood using the funds we have available.*

Have efficient processes and be digital by design

We look for opportunities to deliver services and communicate with our communities digitally, unless we know that the communities we need to reach are digitally excluded.

For example... *We seek to communicate with our customers digitally through e-mail, text and social media rather than sending letters or calling them.*

Use data and intelligence to inform our decisions

We capture data and intelligence and review it regularly to help us forward plan and make the right decisions. We use data and intelligence to evaluate to monitor the impact of our services and functions, always striving for continuous improvement.

For example... *We will use behaviours intelligence gathered from regular surveys to direct and inform the targeted communication and engagement campaigns for the introduction of new waste services.*

What will success look like?

Working closely with our communities and partners will help us meet the needs of our residents and make Stockton-on-Tees a place we can all be proud of.

It will give our children the best start in life by reducing the number of children who live in poverty, ensuring they have a good level of development and are ready for school when they reach reception age, while also supporting children to achieve outstanding educational attainment. It will also support more of our school leavers to remain in education, help them gain employment and/or training to provide opportunities for a better future.

Meeting the objectives set out in this Plan will ensure that our residents feel like they belong to their community, help them to manage their finances better and focus on improving their health and wellbeing so they can live for longer and in good health.

The Plan highlights how we can make the Borough a better place to live, by reducing crime rates and in turn changing perceptions of our Borough, ensuring that residents and visitors feel safe at all times. The success of this plan will be measured by how happy our residents are with the Borough, including whether they are happy with their employment, accommodation and whether they feel worthwhile.

Stockton-on-Tees is already the heart of the Tees Valley economy, however, if the improvements set out in this Plan are met, we can increase the employment rate for our residents and improve our already impressive regional economic performance.

Due to growing financial pressures that public services are dealing with, we will need to ensure that the improvements we make are affordable and efficient. We will also work in partnership with other organisations and with the community to ensure this is feasible.

AGENDA ITEM**REPORT TO CABINET****17 OCTOBER 2024****REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM****CABINET INFORMATION ITEM****Councillor Bob Cook Portfolio – Leader of the Council****Here to Help ‘Going for Gold Family Fun Day’****SUMMARY**

As part of the Councils commitment to tackle inequality and poverty in the borough a series of Here to Help events are planned throughout 2024/25. This report provides an overview of the successful summer **Here to Help ‘Going for Gold Family Fun Day’**, summarising key outcomes and learning which will be to be incorporated into future planning. Attached at **Appendix 1** is a detailed post event briefing.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

Help to Help events support the Councils Powering Our Futures Communities mission in terms of helping to build community capacity and community resilience and the Councils wider commitment to addressing inequality and poverty as detailed in ‘A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees: a strategic framework for tackling inequalities’ and the recently adopted Anti-Poverty Strategy.

DETAIL

1. On Saturday 20 July, a ‘Going for Gold Family Fun Day’ was held in Stockton town centre as part of the Here to Help programme of events. The ‘Going for Gold’ title and marketing drew inspiration from the summer Olympic Games. As noted above this event supported the councils wider Powering our Future Communities mission by providing access to:
 - Community support
 - Encouraging residents to help themselves by finding more about (and where appropriate) joining local community groups and/or volunteering in their community
 - Raising awareness & accessing support services provided by the extensive network of statutory and VCSE providers present at the event.
2. The aim on this occasion (unlike previous events) was to create a larger scale, weekend Here to Help event. Whilst open to all, the hosting of fun activities were specifically targeted at supporting families with children and the boroughs young people. Advice and support services included physical health, mental health, income maximisation, employability, money and debt, food and clothing. In addition the event was aimed at responding to the need for affordable school uniforms and hygiene poverty, two specific priorities detailed in the Anti-Poverty Plan

and to provide children and young people with the chance to take part in an event over the summer holidays a key priority of our Child Poverty Network.

3. Activities were held at several locations: High Street North, in the Parish Gardens, Stockton Library, Thirteen Touchpoint Store and Wellington Square. Key highlights included:
 - 1500 residents attending.
 - 300 preloved and 150 new school uniform items distributed.
 - 50 games and toys provided to local children.
 - 200 new and 300 preloved books given out.
 - 475 hygiene products distributed by Nite Light CIC.
 - 30 + support agencies attending, each engaging with up to 500 individuals.
 - 81 people visiting the library.
 - Over 100 families engaging with sporting activities via the MFC Foundation.

Attendee feedback:

4. During the day attempts were made to seek feedback from attendees. Page 6 of post event briefing (**Appendix 1**) provides a detailed overview of all feedback received. Highlights include the majority of those who attended welcoming the range of activities and support services available. It is also worth noting that whilst the event was 'anti-poverty focused' there was NO reference by any of those who attended to 'stigma' in terms of accessing the support services available.
5. Attending support partners and organisations all noted they were kept very busy throughout the event in terms of delivering activities and providing important advice and support services. All completed post event surveys and praised the event for high footfall, levels of engagement and event organisation. Vitally they reported that the event provided an excellent opportunity to engage with our communities. For example:

Family Action said, "It was lovely to just chat with members of the public. We were able to talk about various things including our Holidays Are Fun provision and volunteering. We were also engaging with the community about other topics as we were talking and giving out the leaflets that were next to our stall"

Foster NorthEast noted, "For us we felt it worthwhile to have a presence at an event which is at the heart of the community. We spoke to 5-6 of our fostering families who attended, and we gave out 30 of our tote bags and had a short conversation with everyone who took one about who we are, raising awareness of fostering. Looking around the event, I thought it was very well organised and set-up. The info and freebies being given out could make a real difference to some people. With the market on, I thought the event and the town had a real buzz about it".

Future events:

6. The success of this event has affirmed that that larger scale events with a wider support and engagement 'offer' is a more effective way to reach residents and maximise partner attendance rather than the previous locally based events. As this allows our communities to engage with a wider variety of activities, access a range of support services and connect with each other.
7. Several points of learning will be incorporated in the development of future events including engaging as early as possible with our local business community to secure monies to support events (via working with Catalyst and the Corporate Social Responsibility network) and engaging with a wider network of both statutory and VCSE partners (as detailed on page 7 of **Appendix 1**).

8. Our next Here to Help event, is due to take place on the 28th of November at Thornaby Pavilion. This event will focus on the boroughs older population focusing on health, income maximisation and preparing/supporting over the winter. In addition to working with a range of partners (statutory and VCSE) wider local community groups will also be invited to attend. For example, the Thornaby Warm Welcome group have agreed to have a stall, to talk to other community members about how they got started and offer their support. An example of how we are using peer support and learning to help build community resilience and encourage others to establish similar community support networks.

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Appendix 1

Here to Help

'Going for Gold Family Fun Day'

20 July 2024

Post Event Briefing



Event aims and objectives

1. On Saturday 20 July, the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees and Community Engagement teams held a 'Going for Gold Family Fun Day' in Stockton town centre as part of their Here to Help programme of events - the 'Going for Gold' title and marketing drew inspiration from the forthcoming Olympic Games. This event supports the Powering our Future Communities mission. The event provided access to support on offer within communities and encouraged residents to engage with and participate in the activities available. For example, a number of organisations spoke to residents about volunteering in their communities and the benefits this can have both for them personally and their wider community.
2. Previous smaller scale Here to Help events in local venues over the last year had not always attracted the numbers of residents we would have liked so a new approach was adopted. Our aim was to create a larger scale event that provided an offer that would attract residents, by hosting fun activities for all the family. In doing so, we would bring people together to spend the day in Stockton Town Centre, but most importantly, this would then give them access to a range of support services. We ensured support was available around physical health, mental health, income maximisation, employability, money and debt, food and clothing and all had a focus on supporting children, families and young people. We were especially keen to respond to the need for affordable school uniforms and an identified need around hygiene poverty. This would provide children and young people with the chance to take part in an event over the summer holidays, which many may not have done otherwise.

Communication and Marketing

3. Colleagues in Comms supported us in marketing this event in terms of social media, newsletters, posters, leaflets and banners. Please see appendix for a full report on social media statistics and the marketing approaches used.



Some examples of key outcomes:

- 1500 residents attending
- 300 preloved uniform items and 150 brand new items distributed.
- 50 games and toys provided to children.
- 200 brand new and 300 preloved books distributed.
- 475 hygiene products distributed.
- 30 + support agencies attending, each engaging with up to 500 individuals.
- 81 people visiting the library.
- Over 100 families engaging with sporting activities with MFC.

Delivery

4. Activities were held at several locations: High Street North, in the Parish Gardens, Stockton Library, Thirteen Touchpoint Store and Wellington Square. Thankfully, the weather was kind and around 1500 residents came down to join in the fun and accessed vital advice, support and information from a wide range of organisations attending.



5. Children took part in crafts, sports, face painting, planting, Lego activities, story time and a Love Exploring Going for Gold town centre trail, which took in all event sites including Wellington Square. Parents and carers were able to speak to representatives from local support services such as Citizen's Advice, Tees Credit Union, Teesside Mind, Thirteen Housing and Employability, NHS 0-19 Service, Red Balloons, Catalyst, Groundwork, Family Action, Family Hubs and many more.

School Uniforms

6. Our preloved school uniform 'Eco Shop' was very popular and gave parents the opportunity to stock up on uniform basics and branded items in preparation for the new school year in September. Our uniforms were provided by council staff and residents from across the borough at collection points in SBC buildings, Tees



Active, Family Hubs and libraries. A donation of £250 worth of new uniforms from Core Highways was also received and parents were so pleased to be able to take a new set of shirts or a new pair of trousers.

7. We estimate that around 300 items of preloved uniforms were given out to parents and around 150 brand new items from the Core Highways donations and other donations of new uniform from the public.
8. One parent told us that she was really pleased because she had, '... stocked up on uniforms for September. *This has saved me a lot of money.*' Another parent said, '*It is great to be able to come out on hot day and we managed to get uniform for all of my kids from the Eco shop.*' People praised the recycling element, branding it as an Eco Shop and promoting the recycling element seemed to reduce the stigma around preloved clothing. One primary aged child was so happy to be able to replace the school fleece he had recently lost and took one for his best friend. A single dad said, '*I can't believe you have these fleeces from my son's school. These fleeces cost over £25 to buy! I have never been able to afford one for my son, it was a luxury item. Thank you so much for allowing us to take one, now my son can fit in with the rest of the kids at school. He is over the moon, just look at his face he's buzzing! What a fantastic idea, this is really needed.*'

Wider Offer for Residents

9. Our shop also provided a selection of over 200 brand new books donated by the National Literacy Trust. These were very well received by children and families, as were our preloved books and toys. We gave out around 50 toys and games and around 300 preloved books which were all in excellent condition. One grandma was over the moon that she had a lovely pile of new books to share with her grandchildren when they come to stay. We also provided a range of sports and other children's clothing and shoes, including winter coats.

10. In response to many reports from services of hygiene poverty, we asked Nite Light CIC to attend and they brought with them a huge amount of hygiene products. This was used to stock a fantastic free toiletries stall, where people could come and choose five free items of their choice. Free fruit and ice pops were provided to all children attending. Everything in the shop was free to residents and feedback has shown that this was well received. An estimated 475 hygiene products were given out.



11. Any surplus items will be put to good use. Thirteen Housing have asked to use some of the excess uniforms collected in their Primrose Hill Community Centre and Sprouts have agreed to use the stock for a uniform stall at their 'Picnic in the Park' in Victoria Hall, Thornaby next month.

Community Transport for Clarences Residents

12. Staff arranged for residents from the Clarences to attend the event by booking Community Transport. One of Stockton Borough Council's Community Transport minibuses was used to transport 24 people to the event. Residents in the Clarences often feel that they can't attend similar events due to the lack of affordable transport. Local resident and Town Councillor, Maria Lacey, helped share the message with residents and encouraged them to take up the offer. Maria said that residents had enjoyed the event and accessed many items including school uniform support. She also praised the 'amazing' bus driver for being so kind and helpful. The same model will be used for future events such as SIRC and Stockton Sparkles and staff were also able to refer Clarences residents to the new Stockton Volunteer Driver Service to help them travel into Stockton and Billingham more regularly in the future.

Feedback from Families

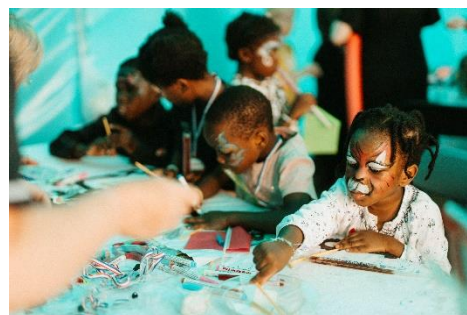
13. Feedback to staff and volunteers from the people attending the event was extremely positive, with many pleasantly surprised by the amount of help available. Families from a range of postcodes completed surveys with our Consultation Officer and a snapshot of the responses given is included:

- All 32 families surveyed said their children had enjoyed event and rated it at least 9 out of 10.
- Of 32 families surveyed, the following scores were given out of 10 for how useful the event was to them:
 - Score 10 given by 18 families
 - Score 9 given by 7 families
 - Score 8 given by 7 families



14. Families were asked about their favourite parts of the event. Here are some of their responses:

- Lots of information available, all in one place
- Everyone being very friendly and welcoming.
- Support system is lovely and help in times of need.
- It raises awareness and promotes services.
- Activities and free items, face painting, crafts
- It brought out lots of people and you could see the different organisations all wanting to help people.
- Getting useful free things like radiator keys and toiletries
- The weather and just being out and about and getting to have a kick about.



15. Families asked for more of these events in the future and for more activities for children over the summer holidays. They spoke about the event having a 'nice atmosphere' and said that they were having lots of fun. People praised the fact that everything was free and the layout of the pagodas was really useful. Some suggested all the activities should be in one place and linking the two main sites more clearly is something staff noted needed developing



next time. One resident said, 'It is nice to know that there are so many organisations out there interested in helping us.'

Feedback from Organisations

16. Over 30 support organisations and services attended the event and it was clear to see how busy they were with members of the public. Many provided interactive elements for the children to enjoy. For example, the NHS 0-19 service dressed as a toothbrush and toothpaste and showed children how to brush some giant teeth.



Groundwork planted seeds with the children, Mind

brought their elephant mascot and made dreamcatchers and jewellery and MFC Foundation taught ball skills and played mini matches. Feedback has been gathered using a survey which was sent out to all participating agencies after the event. Many of those surveyed said that they had engaged with over 100 people, with Cleveland Fire Brigade speaking to at least 150 and Cleveland Police interacting with up to 500.

17. Family Action said, *'It was lovely to just chat with members of the public. We were able to talk about various things including our HAF provision and volunteering. We were also engaging with the community about other topics as we were talking and giving out the leaflets that were next to our stall.'*

18. Foster Northeast said, *'For us we felt it worthwhile to have a presence at an event which is at the heart of the community. We spoke to 5-6 of our fostering families who attended and we gave out 30 of our tote bags and had a short conversation with everyone who took one about who we are, raising awareness of fostering. Looking around the event, I thought it was very well organised and set-up. The info and freebies being given out could make a real difference to some people. With the market on, I thought the event and the town had a real buzz about it.'*

19. At Stockton Central Library, 81 children and their carers took part in a new Lego coding activity run by library staff. They said, *'It gave us the opportunity for a trial run of the new LEGO kits and it looks like these could be very popular. We did see a number of families who have never been to the library before.' The event was also a great opportunity to showcase the brand new electric mobile library bus and lots of children enjoyed stepping on board and listening to a story'.*

20. Thirteen Group said, *'It was a great opportunity to work together as a collective to deliver a fun packed day to support customers.'*

21. Catalyst said, *'Having a Saturday event really helped attract the crowds. The area in Parish Gardens was a little quieter than on the main high street, however this didn't stop people coming and getting involved in the stalls and activities. Having the seated area for families to sit and relax was a brilliant idea, and watching families and children play was lovely as usually the area is not utilised. Overall, it*

was a fantastic event and we really enjoyed being there as an organisation and enjoyed seeing the people of Stockton engage and have fun! ‘

22. Salvation Army said, *‘It was a fabulous day, very well organised and very well received. The parents who interacted with everyone in our tent were full of praise for the event. We could have more space on the High St next time. We have a regional emergency van we could bring and serve refreshments from.’*
23. The event was also used by Stockton Council to gather some insights and views on the draft Council Plan.

Next Steps and Learning

24. We hope that feedback from this event has proved that it has the potential to become a regular annual event in Stockton. There are elements that the team have identified that could improve the event further in the future and our partner organisations have also offered some great suggestions.
25. We all agreed that we needed to find a way to link the different sites more obviously for those attending. The Parish Gardens site was quieter than the High Street, despite signage being in place. There were people who enjoyed relaxing on the deckchairs in the Parish Gardens and watching their children play, but there was scope for more activities there. Some music, an entertainer or a food offer would have attracted more to that site and improved the offer. One resident suggested some old-fashioned fairground/school fair type games which could potentially be loaned to us and keep costs down. An ice cream van/stall would have been a big draw and would have removed the task of keeping ice pops frozen!
26. Another suggestion was to move all the activities to one site on the High Street, including the sports and games, so that the event would have a clearer footprint and would help promote more of the High Street. Road closures may need to be considered for this option.
27. Our NHS providers from the 0-19 service, Sun Safety and Stop Smoking Services suggested that a broader range of NHS services could have filled a whole pagoda and made an NHS tent. There were suggestions of more adult NHS services being there to do blood pressure checks.
28. Food, other than a free ice pop and fruit, was part of the offer. We had been unable to a VCSE food provider and were keen not to away trade from the town centre shops and market. This could be reconsidered, with some food stalls on the Parish Gardens. Cost would need to be considered as having expensive food stalls would go against the ethos of the Here to Help event.



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book
take

29. Although some support was secured from businesses, this needed more time and is something that could be developed for a future event. Further collaboration with Catalyst around gaining CSR funding for specific elements could allow us to enhance the event.
30. We need to use our learning around school uniforms to make sure that we are working smarter to get uniforms to where they need to be. There have been discussions about how we could store and allow people to order preloved uniform. Some schools have developed open access uniform exchange facilities, promoting as we did, the recycling benefits of using preloved uniforms. A swap style model helps people to feel positive about this so that they feel they are giving back something someone else can use.
31. We will invite local community groups as well as larger or more established VCSE organisations so that they can promote their offer and also demonstrate the success of their group which could inspire others. For example, at the next event at the Pavilion, the Warm Welcome group could have a stall to tell people about the group and encourage people to visit. The session will be on at that time so residents can go along and sample what is on offer. Leaders of the group could talk to other community members about how they got set up and offer their support to others with similar ideas, working towards the Powering our Future – Communities mission.

Here to Help Future Events Programme – next planned events

32. We are planning our next Here to Help event for late autumn. This event will have a focus on older people and preparedness for the winter. Many of the team collaborated on the Stockton Winter Wellbeing Festival for over 50s last year. This took place at Thornaby Pavilion in November and was a popular event, bringing around 50 support services under one roof to advise on health, benefits, fuel, social activities etc. As with our summer event, there were activities to attract residents such as musical performances, crafts and refreshments. We are planning to hold a similar event again at the Pavilion this November and develop the activities on offer.
33. We also have plans for a third event to be held in Billingham in the new year and for that to have a focus on mental health and wellbeing. Engagement with the public has shown us on many occasions that mental health is a huge area of need and the time following Christmas, when the days are short and finances can be even tighter, is a time of concern for many. We will collaborate with partners to provide positive experiences coupled with access to mental health services and groups providing a range of social activities.



Briefing appendix

Going for Gold Comms Report

Social Media

Facebook

20 July

Impressions: 11,035, Reach: 10,857, Engagement: 200, Likes: 4, Comments: 3, Shares: 13

17 July

Impressions: 10,668, Reach: 10,491, Engagement: 113, Likes: 9, Comments: 1, Shares: 16

11 July

Impressions: 9,459, Reach: 9,267, Engagement: 49, Likes: 7, Shares: 6

3 July

Impressions: 20,682, Reach: 19,182, Engagement: 219, Likes: 11, Comments: 1, Shares: 39

25 June

Impressions: 10,998, Reach: 9,816, Engagement: 242, Likes: 17, Comments: 2, Shares: 34

20 June (about school uniform donations but mentions G4G)

Impressions: 10,091, Reach: 9,497, Engagement: 159, Likes: 3, Comments: 6, Shares: 21

17 June

Impressions: 11,516, Reach: 11,341, Engagement: 222, Likes: 15, Comments: 4, Shares: 29

14 June (about school uniform donations but mentions G4G)

Impressions: 19,508, Reach: 18,098, Engagement: 431, Likes: 25, Comments: 8, Shares: 76

20 July <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1814554643747205403>

Views: 316

17 July <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1813603371514777768>

Views: 260

11 July <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1811429053519315373>

Views: 317

3 July <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1808514839964172641>

Views: 255

25 June <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1805630841277608281>

Views: 263

17 June <https://x.com/stocktoncouncil/status/1802716642100584573>

Views: 321

LinkedIn

20 July - Likes: 4, Reposts: 1

17 July - Likes: 1

11 July

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/stocktoncouncil_going-for-gold-family-fun-day-1-week-activity-7217194747403141120-JMzS?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Likes: 1

3 July - Likes: 5, Reposts: 2

June - Reposts: 2

KYIT

- 19 July
 - <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/kyit/19-july-2024/>
- 21 June – 12 July
 - <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/kyit/12-july-2024/>
 - <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/kyit/5-july-2024/>
 - <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/kyit/28-june-2024/>
 - <https://intranet.stockton.gov.uk/kyit/21-june-2024/>

Examples of Service / Parter newsletters

- Healthy Schools Newsletter (May and July editions).
- Catalyst E-Bulletin 17 July
- Catalyst E-Bulletin 19 June (online version)
- Family Hubs email newsletter 12 July
- Cost of Living Briefing

Intranet banner

Displayed from w/c 17 June until 20 July.

Digital screens

External facing (Wellington Square, Tees Active venues, and Thirteen's window) and internal facing (SBC offices and depots) displayed from w/c 17 June until 20 July.

Other

- Posters and flyers distributed.

- Shared with schools.
- Listing on TVCA Visit Tees Valley: [Going for Gold: Family Fun Day - Events in Tees Valley \(teesvalley-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.teesvalley-ca.gov.uk)
- Stockton-on-Tees News article, in circulation from w/c 15 July.
- Selfie frame and postcard created.
- Photography arranged. Link to photos has been shared.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 OCTOBER 2024

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Children and Young People - Councillor Lisa Evans

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF NARROWING THE GAP IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

SUMMARY

The Children and Young People Select Committee has completed a review examining Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment. A copy of the Select Committee's report and recommendation is appended for consideration by Cabinet.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included in the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24. The review is now complete and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Children and Young People Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council works collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to deliver the following shared objectives:

1. Improve attendance

Support schools to improve attendance:

- Encourage school leaders' use of the Attendance Self Evaluation Toolkit to identify what is working well, and areas which could be developed
- Promote an inclusive and relevant curriculum - where a young person wants to attend
- Work with the Team Around the School Service.
- Ensure that schools are equipped to deal with health issues.
- Identify individual barriers to attendance to better target support and intervention with specific reference to young carers

2. Forge positive relationships

Ensure that school culture proactively forges positive relationships between pupils, staff and parent/ carers:

- Promote respectful behaviours from all partners including teachers.
- Involve parents in school life.
- Extend opportunities for enhanced transition.

3. Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carers communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.

- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

4. Identify and support young carers

- Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.
- Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

5. Managing emotions

Strengthen environment and opportunities for pupils to manage emotions:

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme
- Design and delivery of courses to meet pupil need and support parents, with specific reference to:
 - managing behaviour effectively.
 - supporting mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels.
 - positive parenting skills.
- Strengthen the use of pupil voice to support development of school environments which better support them to manage their emotions.

6. Refine teaching strategies

Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.

7. Developing speaking and listening skills

- Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
- Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills

8. Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

9. Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

10. Enhance curriculum development

Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.

- Innovate a local curriculum.

11. Strengthen understanding of career pathways

Clarify pathways to careers early in school life:

- Design and delivery of courses to clarify current career pathways for pupils and parents, including vocational careers and options other than traditional routes.
- Employment & Training Hub to link with schools to notify parents of apprenticeships events.
- Promote aspirational/motivational approaches.

- Strengthen links between schools/parents/careers advisor.
- Share best practice regarding "careers" evenings/ events in primary and secondary schools.
- Invite parents into school who have unusual careers.
- Educate parents on opportunities post 16.

12. Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition.
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness.
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate.

13. Enhance skills to respond to special needs

Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

- Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools.
- Promote vocational opportunities.

14. Review behaviour policies

Review behaviour policies to ensure that they are appropriate and proportionate and that inclusion policies align with behaviour policies:

- What happens when a young person is removed from the classroom. Where do they go? What teaching takes place?

15. Embed and extend pastoral support

Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need.

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme.

16. Strengthen support for parent/carers to develop language and reading skills

Design and deliver courses and activities to develop reading and language skills.

- Promote Functional English Courses.
- Invite parents/ carers to support reading groups at primary school.
- Promote reading through free Enrichment/after school clubs.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of reading.
- Use school social media to help parents/carers learn
- Ensure materials are easy read/jargon free to involve parent/carers.
- Key messages being shared from antenatal contact.
- Work with Read Easy Charity - helping people learn to read.

17. Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

DETAIL

1. Based on the top challenges identified by Stockton Primary and Secondary Schools, the Select Committee decided to focus their work on two key factors impacting on educational attainment:

- Attendance
- Communication (vocabulary, oracy and literacy)

2. The overall aim of the project was to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.
3. An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was adopted for the review. This approach promotes a positive mindset by:
 - valuing strengths rather than focusing on deficiencies
 - identifying what is valued and effective and building on that
 - involving all the stakeholders to work together to agree solutions
 - sharing the responsibility with all stakeholders for making the solutions happen

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

4. The recommendations set out shared objectives based on feedback from stakeholders and through engagement with pupils and parent / carers. They identify a range of actions to improve attendance and communication skills.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6. There are no direct legal implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

RISK ASSESSMENT

7. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

8. Not applicable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

9. None.

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Children and Young People Select Committee

Appreciative Inquiry of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment

September 2024



Children and Young People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Stockton Data – Vulnerable Groups

Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Engagement

Appendix 3 – Stakeholder Feedback

Appendix 4 – Lived Experience for Pupils

Appendix 5 – Lived Experience for Parent/ Carers

Appendix 6 – Parent Carer Forum Feedback – Narrowing the Gap

Appendix 7 – Parent Carer Forum Feedback – Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Select Committee – Membership

Councillor Carol Clark (Chair)
Councillor Barbara Inman (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ray Godwin
Councillor David Reynard
Councillor Stephen Richardson
Councillor Paul Rowling
Councillor Emily Tate
Councillor Sally Ann Watson
Councillor Katie Weston

Acknowledgments

Eddie Huntington, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Achievement
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Anthony Douglas CBE
Charrise Monero
Kevn Burns, Attendance Adviser DfE
Lorna Nichol, Children North East
Gill McCleave, Service Lead Education 0 - 11
Anthony Boden, Community and Partnership Manager
Jane Williams, Team Manager, School Support

Special thanks also to all the organisations and individuals who took part in the stakeholder engagement (Appendix 2).

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the final report of the Children and Young People Select Committee following its review of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment.

We adopted an Appreciative Inquiry approach to the review as it was critical that all stakeholders had a meaningful input and were able to share their experience of what was working well and their ideas on how to build on that by agreeing on shared purpose and outcomes.

We were overwhelmed by the commitment from our schools and other organisations who took part in our stakeholder events and who shared so many experiences and ideas. We could not have completed this work without them.

Crucial also was capturing pupil and parent/ carer voice and this will continue to be important as we move forward to action.

Our heartfelt thanks are extended to all those who contributed to our work and to the Council officers involved, as without their constant input and hard work, this report would not have been possible.



Councillor Carol Clark
Chair



Councillor Barbara Inman
Vice Chair

Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents the outcomes of an appreciative inquiry (AI) into narrowing the gap in educational attainment.

1.2 The educational achievement gap has a huge impact on aspirations and opportunities and can feed into a cycle of other socioeconomic trends. Educational achievement, and its relationship with socioeconomic background, is one of the enduring issues in educational research. This makes it vital that we work together in a coherent and purposeful way to find out what approaches and strategies can be used to make a difference to the achievement of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, children on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) register or Children in Our Care (CIOC).

1.3 Based on the top challenges identified by Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools, the Select Committee decided to focus their work on two key factors impacting on educational attainment:

- Attendance
- Communication (vocabulary, oracy and literacy)

1.4 The work focused on exploring the following key questions within these strands:

Attendance

1. What are the barriers to attendance/reasons for absence?
2. How can absence be eliminated?
3. How can school provide a welcome and supportive school environment for pupils and their families?
4. How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

Communication

1. What are the reasons for low levels of communication/ language development?
2. What are the impacts of low levels of communication/ language development for our students?
3. How can low levels of communication/ language development (oracy, vocabulary be eliminated?
 - In early years
 - In primary
 - In secondary
4. How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

1.5 The overall aim of the project was to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.

1.6 This Appreciative Inquiry has accessed a range of stakeholders across Stockton in order to capture the varying needs of the different communities. Engagement has sought to bring stakeholders together to design:

- A shared vision for closing the gap
- An action plan informed by evidenced-based research to secure impact
- Interventions tailored to the current specific needs of Stockton schools and pupils most affected by the attainment gap.

- To secure multi-agency commitment to implement the action plan
- To secure multi-agency accountability for action taken and impact

1.7 Engagement has included:

- Pupil and Parent Voice Interviews – February 2024 (120 pupils; 40 parent/carers)
- Stakeholder Event on 8 March 2024 Attendance (50 attendees)
- Stakeholder Event on 22 March 2024 Communication (47 attendees)
- Stakeholder Workshop 15 May 2024 – Health (10 attendees)
- Digital survey (78 primary; 24 secondary; 146 parent/carer)
- Parent Carer Forum Surveys (feedback was sought from the 1800 members)

1.8 Stakeholders involved in this Appreciative Inquiry included senior leaders from a wide range of schools, services and agencies:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Further Education Colleges
- Pupil Referral Units
- Parent Carer Forum
- Local Authority representatives from: Safeguarding; Education; Inclusion; Health Education and Wellbeing; Early Support; Early Help; SEND; Mental Health Support; Careers; Virtual School; Attendance; Community Engagement; Legal; Culture and Libraries
- Public Health
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE): local and regional

Headline Feedback – Stakeholder Engagement

- Importance of communication and positive relationships
- Need to understand pressures on families
- Importance of partnership and community support
- Need to listen to the child’s and parent’s voice
- The importance of teaching and support tailored to the needs of the individual child
- Need to provide opportunities for social interaction and the development of speaking and listening skills
- Promote the importance of reading
- Design a curriculum meaningful for all children
- Celebrate achievement

Headline Feedback – Pupil Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Impact of caring responsibilities
- Impact of technology
- Need to manage own feelings
- Value of celebration and reward
- Value of after school clubs

Headline Feedback – Parent Carer Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Value of good transitions
- Importance of strong communication
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on behaviour
- Ambition and aspiration
- Value of multi-agency support

Conclusion

1.8 Significant efforts are being made to narrow the gap in educational attainment across schools and services within the local authority and wider services across the region, including the voluntary and charity sector. Our findings have established that sometimes these approaches are not coherently focused and may not fully meet the individual needs of our children and their families. This appreciative inquiry, through the voices of our children and their families, has been instrumental in helping to fine-tune these strategies and securing buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders to implement the actions identified. Ongoing future monitoring, analysis and evaluation will establish if these refreshed approaches strengthen the impact made.

Recommendations

That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council works collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to deliver the following shared objectives:

1. Improve attendance

Support schools to improve attendance:

- Encourage school leaders' use of the Attendance Self Evaluation Toolkit to identify what is working well, and areas which could be developed
- Promote an inclusive and relevant curriculum - where a young person wants to attend
- Work with the Team Around the School Service.
- Ensure that schools are equipped to deal with health issues.
- Identify individual barriers to attendance to better target support and intervention with specific reference to young carers

2. Forge positive relationships

Ensure that school culture proactively forges positive relationships between pupils, staff and parent/ carers:

- Promote respectful behaviours from all partners including teachers.
- Involve parents in school life.
- Extend opportunities for enhanced transition.

3. Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carer communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

4. Identify and support young carers

- Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.
- Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

5. Managing emotions

Strengthen environment and opportunities for pupils to manage emotions:

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme
- Design and delivery of courses to meet pupil need and support parents, with specific reference to:
 - managing behaviour effectively.
 - supporting mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels.
 - positive parenting skills.
- Strengthen the use of pupil voice to support development of school environments which better support them to manage their emotions.

6. Refine teaching strategies

Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.

7. Developing speaking and listening skills

- Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
- Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills

8. Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

9. Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

10. Enhance curriculum development

Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.

- Innovate a local curriculum.

11. Strengthen understanding of career pathways

Clarify pathways to careers early in school life:

- Design and delivery of courses to clarify current career pathways for pupils and parents, including vocational careers and options other than traditional routes.
- Employment & Training Hub to link with schools to notify parents of apprenticeships events.
- Promote aspirational/motivational approaches.
- Strengthen links between schools/parents/careers advisor.
- Share best practice regarding "careers" evenings/ events in primary and secondary schools.
- Invite parents into school who have unusual careers.
- Educate parents on opportunities post 16.

12. Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition.
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness.
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate.

13. Enhance skills to respond to special needs

Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

- Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools.
- Promote vocational opportunities.

14. Review behaviour policies

Review behaviour policies to ensure that they are appropriate and proportionate and that inclusion policies align with behaviour policies:

- What happens when a young person is removed from the classroom. Where do they go? What teaching takes place?

15. Embed and extend pastoral support

Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need.

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme.

16. Strengthen support for parent/carers to develop language and reading skills

Design and deliver courses and activities to develop reading and language skills.

- Promote Functional English Courses.
- Invite parents/ carers to support reading groups at primary school.
- Promote reading through free Enrichment/after school clubs.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of reading.
- Use school social media to help parents/carers learn
- Ensure materials are easy read/jargon free to involve parent/carers.
- Key messages being shared from antenatal contact.
- Work with Read Easy Charity - helping people learn to read.

17. Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

Introduction

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Scrutiny Brief

2.3 Based on the top challenges identified by Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools, the Select Committee decided to focus their work on two key factors impacting on educational attainment:

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2.5 The overall aim of the project was to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.

2.6 The review has sought to:

- Improve identification of disadvantaged, CIOC and SEN pupils
- Better understand the issues around disadvantaged, CIOC and SEN pupils' educational outcomes including at very local level

- Identify what more can be done locally to tackle these issues
- Assess how well current policies, services and interventions address the issues and identify potential gaps
- Identify the changes needed to policies, services and interventions based on best practice, national recommendations, evidence base and data
- Establish what more should be done to provide support in early years, in particular to new mothers/families
- Review the effectiveness of the strategic and local approaches in place to tackle lower disadvantaged, CIOC and SEND outcomes
- Identify how the Council can, together with its partners, collectively respond to tackle the issues identified

Methodology

2.7 An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach was adopted for the review. This approach promotes a positive mindset by:

- valuing strengths rather than focusing on deficiencies
- identifying what is valued and effective and building on that
- involving all the stakeholders to work together to agree solutions
- sharing the responsibility with all stakeholders for making the solutions happen

2.8 This strength-based approach values everyone and everything. AI values everyone's contribution and enables all participants to connect through identifying a shared purpose and outcome, communicating in a positive way together.

2.9 The Appreciative Inquiry has involved the following stages:

1. Discovery

- Identify strengths: What are the strengths of the current system? What are the strengths of the students, teachers, schools and communities that are successfully closing the attainment gap?
- Identify successes: What are some examples of successful efforts to close the attainment gap? What can we learn from these successes?
- Identify opportunities: What are the opportunities to close the attainment gap in the future? What resources and supports are available to help us achieve this goal?

2. Dream

- Envision an ideal future: What would the education system look like if the attainment gap were closed? What would be the benefits for students, teachers, schools, and society as a whole?
- Create a shared vision: Bring together stakeholders from all levels of the wider education and support systems to create a shared vision for closing the attainment gap.
- Develop a plan: Develop a plan for achieving the shared vision. The plan should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

3. Design

- Identify strategies: What are the strategies that will be most effective in closing the attainment gap? What are the evidence-based practices that have been shown to be successful
- Develop interventions: Develop interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of the students, teachers, and schools that are most affected by the attainment gap.
- Create a supportive environment: Create a supportive environment for all students, teachers, and schools. This includes providing adequate resources, creating a positive school climate, and fostering a culture of high expectations.

4. Destiny

- Implement the plan: Put the plan into action. This includes providing training and support for teachers, implementing the interventions, and monitoring progress.
- Celebrate successes: Celebrate successes along the way. This will help to maintain momentum and motivation.
- Make adjustments: Make adjustments to the plan as needed. This is an ongoing process that will require ongoing evaluation and feedback.

2.10 This Appreciative Inquiry has accessed a range of stakeholders across Stockton in order to capture the varying needs of the different communities. Engagement has sought to bring stakeholders together to design:

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- Local Authority representatives from: Safeguarding; Education; Inclusion; Health Education and Wellbeing; Early Support; Early Help; SEND; Mental Health Support; Careers; Virtual School; Attendance; Community Engagement; Legal; Culture and Libraries
- Public Health
- VCSE: local and regional

2.13 Alongside engagement activity, scheduled Select Committee meetings were utilised to gather a range of related background information supporting the work.

2.14 A final workshop took place in September with a representative from each sector/ service to consider the emerging areas for recommendations and work with the Committee members to refine these into recommendations to influence strategy and identify tangible actions.

2.15 A follow-up session is planned with the same attendees within the next 12 months to seek feedback on actions to implement the recommendations and evaluation of their impact. The objectives will be to:

- identify and share action taken and impact across the full range of stakeholders.
- celebrate successes to maintain momentum and motivation.
- evaluate and take feedback on the current action plan.
- make adjustments to the action plan as necessary.

The Challenge

2.16 Educational disadvantage is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors. Some of the key causes include:

2.17 **Socioeconomic status:** Socioeconomic status is one of the strongest predictors of educational attainment. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience a range of disadvantages that can negatively impact their education, such as:

- Limited access to resources: Low-income families may not be able to afford educational resources such as books, computers, or tutoring.
- Poorer health and nutrition: Children from low-income families are more likely to experience health problems and malnutrition, which can affect their ability to learn.
- Less stable home environments: Low-income families may be more likely to experience homelessness, eviction, or other forms of housing instability, which can disrupt a child's education.

2.18 Stockton-on-Tees already goes some way to showcasing why the socioeconomic gap does not always lead to poorer results. Unfortunately, the results although stronger than the majority of other North East regions, and above the national average, still demonstrate an education gap for disadvantaged students in the most socioeconomically deprived areas.

2.19 **Race and ethnicity:** Students from BME backgrounds are more likely to experience educational disadvantage than their white peers. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of representation: Students from BME Backgrounds may not see themselves reflected in the curriculum or in the teaching staff, which can make them feel like they don't belong in school.

2.20 While this is an area of increase, particularly in recent years with a growing refugee community as well as economic migrants filling gaps in the NHS and care system. Statistically this is still a small part of the education community and is less easy to define in terms of difference.

2.21 **Gender:** There are also gender gaps in educational attainment, with boys or girls outperforming the other group in certain subjects or at certain levels of education. For example, girls tend to outperform boys in reading and writing, while boys tend to outperform girls in maths and science. These gaps can be due to a number of factors, including:

- Gender stereotypes: Gender stereotypes can discourage girls from pursuing STEM fields and discourage boys from pursuing humanities fields.
- Teacher bias: Teachers may unconsciously hold biases that favour one gender over the other, which can affect their expectations of students and their teaching methods.
- Socialisation: Boys and girls are often socialised differently, which can affect their attitudes towards school and their academic performance.

2.22 While there are some excellent examples of schools creating STEM opportunities for girls or creatively tackling ‘girls into maths’ programmes; the divide is still marked and this will need a greater buy in from, home, school and businesses.

2.23 **Special education needs and disability:** Students with special education needs or disabilities are more likely to experience educational disadvantage than their peers without SEND. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- Lack of access to appropriate services: Students with SEND may not have access to the services and supports they need to succeed in school.
- Inclusion and accommodation: Schools may not be inclusive or accommodating of students with SEND, which can make it difficult for them to participate in the same activities as their peers.
- Teacher training: Teachers may not be adequately trained to identify and support students with SEND, which can lead to them falling behind in their studies.

2.24 Challenges in SEND funding mean that schools need to support more than many feel comfortable with. This leads to behaviour challenges and sometimes suspensions and exclusion. Linked to this poor attendance, often perceived by families to be anxiety, leads to poorer educational outcomes.

Challenges for Stockton-on-Tees Primary and Secondary Schools

2.25 An analysis of feedback from published pupil premium statements revealed the following top challenges for Stockton primary and secondary schools:

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PRIMARY Top Challenges		
Challenge	Number of primary schools (60)	%
1. Social & emotional wellbeing	50	83%
2. Attendance	44	73%
3. Cultural capital	42	70%
4. Reading	40	67%
5. Early language development	37	62%

This document was classified as OFFICIAL

SECONDARY Top Challenges

Challenge	Number of secondary schools (13)	%
1. Attendance	12	92%
2. Maths	10	77%
2. Behaviour for learning	10	77%
4. Aspiration/ careers	9	69%
4. Reading	9	69%

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2.26 The biggest increases since 2022-23 were:

- Attendance
- Communication – oracy
- Cultural Capital
- Impacts of the cost-of-living crisis

2.27 Based on the identified challenges, the Select Committee decided to focus their work attendance and communication (vocabulary, oracy and literacy).

2.28 The report set out at **Appendix 1** was reviewed by the Select Committee as part of its review and presents a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022 – 2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It is informed by the latest available data, some of which remains unvalidated and compared to national averages where they exist. It includes performance outcomes for:

- Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
- Performance by gender;
- Black and Minority Ethnic children;
- Children and Young People in Our Care ;
- Children with Special Needs;
- Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Focus on Attendance

2.29 School attendance plays a significant role in influencing the educational attainment gap. Research consistently demonstrates that pupils who miss more school tend to have lower academic achievement compared to their peers who attend school regularly. This holds true for students from all backgrounds, but the impact is particularly pronounced for those from disadvantaged groups.

2.30 Several factors contribute to the importance of school attendance for educational attainment. Firstly, pupils who miss school lose out on valuable learning time, potentially falling behind in their studies and facing difficulties catching up. Secondly, absenteeism can lead to disengagement from school and a loss of motivation to learn, creating a downward spiral of poor attendance and subpar academic performance. Thirdly, missing school can deprive pupils of essential social and emotional development opportunities, limiting their interactions with peers and teachers and increasing the likelihood of experiencing isolation and loneliness.

2.31 School attendance stands out as a key factor that can be effectively addressed through policy and intervention.

2.32 The reasons for absence / barriers to attending school can include:

Pastoral

- Transition points
- Lack of support on return from suspension, behaviour policies
- Isolation through absence/no sense of belonging
- Perceived lack of a pastoral offer
- Persistent and severe absence citing anxiety/ emotionally based school avoidance

School curriculum and process

- Academic curriculum
- Process driven approaches to absenteeism
- Delays in referring to support services resulting in entrenched absence

Multiagency

- Lack of specialist placements for SEND pupils
- Support services offer
- Resource/waiting times for specialist interventions

Absence can be reduced through:

Strong pastoral offer

- Welcoming, caring, a sense of belonging, feeling safe.
- Identifying the right support at the right time
- Embedding a relationship-based practise response

Range of support

- Multi-agency working – for example

2.33 Sanctions and consequences aren't strongly associated with improvements, the relationships with peers and teachers, and understanding the importance of school are strongly associated with improving attendance.

DfE Statutory Guidance: Working together to improve school attendance

2.34 The DfE published statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities on 29 February 2024 applying from 19 August 2024. The guidance sets out expectations on schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities who must have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance. All partners should work together to:

Expect - Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor - Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand - When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support - Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support - Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce - Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2.35 The Regional DfE Attendance Adviser provided an update on implementation to the Select Committee in April 2024 and reported on good progress in implementing the guidance by schools and Local Authorities.

2.36 The significant benefit of Targeting Support Meetings (having conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils) and multi-disciplinary support for families was highlighted.

Local Absence Data

2.37 In recent years, overall absence for all children and young people attending primary, secondary and special schools within Stockton-on-Tees has followed a similar trend to the regional and national average, with the overall absence of all children and young people increasing from 4.8% in 2018/ 2019 to 7.7% during the 2022/2023 academic year (compared to 7.4% nationally during 2022/23).

2.38 Since 2018, the proportion of persistent absences (children and young people missing 10% of education – equivalent to one day or more a fortnight over the academic year) has more than doubled. During the 2018/2019 academic year 10.8% of all children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees had persistent absence rates, increasing to 22% during the 2022/2023 academic year. These challenges are reflected in both the regional and national averages (a regional rate of 22.5% for 2022/2023 and a national rate of 21.2% for 2022/2023) for persistent absence, which have also doubled over the same time period.

2.39 The proportion of severe absence (children and young people missing more than 50% of education) in Stockton-on-Tees has also increased during this time period, from 1% in 2018/2019 to 2.4% in 2022/2023, a trend that follows our regional and national averages (2.3% regionally in 2022/2023 and 2% nationally in 2022/2023).

2.40 Within Stockton-on-Tees there are some groups who are more vulnerable to lower attendance and higher absence. These include:

- Children and young people of secondary school age
- Children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans
- Children and young people who are entitled to Free School Meals
- Children and young people who are in care
- Children and young people with a social worker
- Children and young people who receive multiple suspensions
- Girls (since 21/22)
- Children and young people of some ethnic minorities

Attendance Strategy

2.41 In 2023/24 an Attendance Strategy was developed. This will be finalised in Autumn 2024. This strategy has been co-produced by a range of internal and external agencies and includes pupil and parent voice. By forging stronger partnerships with each other, we are striving to make the changes necessary as a whole community to support our pupils to attend school regularly.

Priority 1 – Attendance is everyone’s business

- Workforce development
- Effective communication
- Understanding the value of good attendance
- Awareness and commitment to responsibilities

Priority 2 – We know what good attendance looks like

- Good quality and accurate data
- Targeting resources effectively
- Understanding attendance patterns and trends
- Identifying children and young people at risk of low attendance early

Priority 3 – Developing a culture of aspiration and engagement

- Working together in partnership with families
- Understanding the needs of families
- Attachment and trauma aware approaches
- Whole school approaches

Priority 4 – Supporting children and young people through transitions

- Understanding and responding to pupil needs
- Identifying support required
- Multi agency support
- Delivering timely support
- Sharing good practice

Understanding Attendance: ImpactEd Evaluation

2.42 ImpactEd who provide consultancy and research launched Understanding Attendance as a national project to help schools understand the drivers behind poor attendance in their setting. The project launched in Spring 2023 and early findings using survey data from over 30,000 young people and attendance data from over 200,000 pupils revealed the following key factors were having an impact on attendance in schools at a national level:

- Sense of school belonging as a key driver of attendance across all contexts.
- An emerging challenge of a ‘second transition’ from Year 7 to Year 8 that deserved greater attention
- Attendance drivers were intersectional. School leaders should avoid considering demographic factors in isolation. Female pupils who were eligible for Pupil Premium and had a special educational need were particularly likely to be low attending
- Awareness of sanctions and consequences wasn’t strongly linked to improved attendance. Understanding of the importance of school and relationships with peers and teachers were more strongly associated with attendance

2.43 Their recommendations centred on:

1. Pupil voice and pupil leadership
2. Developing positive whole-school culture around attendance
3. Making the most of wraparound opportunities

Stakeholder Feedback – Attendance

2.44 A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on 8 March 2024 to seek feedback on the key questions for the appreciative inquiry and work collaboratively on solutions. 50 stakeholders attended this session.

2.45 A list of stakeholders is attached at **Appendix 2** and all comments recorded from group discussions are reproduced at **Appendix 3**.

2.46 Key themes from the workshop discussions are set out below:

What are the barriers to attendance/ reasons for absence?

- Emotional Health
- Attitudes to School
- Cost of Living/ Poverty
- Pressures at Home
- School Organisational Issues
- Communication
- Bullying
- Health Conditions – evidence not required
- SEND

How can absence be eliminated?

- Communication and Engagement
- Relevant School Offer
- Understanding and Flexibility
- Practical Help and Support
- Partnership working – whole school/ parent/community approach

How can school provide a welcome and supportive environment for pupils and their families?

- Welcoming staff
- Good communication and relationships
- Language considerations
- School /Community Links
- Positive Culture – rewards for good behaviour and attendance
- Individual Support

How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

- Good communication
- Positive Culture
- Collaborative Working
- Events
- Building relationships with families and pupils

Focus on Communication

2.47 Early Language Development and Communication have been highlighted as a challenge within our schools. Both these challenges impact vocabulary development, oracy and literacy. As a result, pupils may find it more difficult to articulate their feelings which can result in more challenging behaviour.

2.48 The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with

adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

- 2.49 The size of a child's vocabulary is the best predictor of success on future tests:
- children with a poor vocabulary at five are four times more likely to struggle with reading in adulthood and three times more likely to have mental health issues.
 - If a child is never read to, they will have heard about 4662 words by the age of 5. Even being read to once a week increases that to 63,570 words.
 - Reading – right across the curriculum, and at home – is the key to improving vocabulary development.
- 2.50 If children and young people do not gain the skills to communicate effectively, this impacts:
- Directly on their ability to achieve and participate at school
 - Directly and indirectly, it impacts on their ability to get or hold down a job
 - Directly and indirectly, it impacts on their ability to make appropriate choices for themselves and their families
 - Indirectly, it contributes to the likelihood that they will die younger.

Stakeholder Workshop - Communication

2.51 A stakeholder engagement workshop was held on 22 March 2024 to seek feedback on the key questions for the appreciative inquiry and work collaboratively on solutions. 47 stakeholders attended this session.

2.52 A list of stakeholders is attached at **Appendix 2** and all comments recorded from group discussions are reproduced at **Appendix 3**.

2.53 Key themes from the workshop discussions are set out below:

What are the reasons for low level communication/ language development?

- Reading
- Changing mealtimes
- Family/ parental role
- Technology / Social Media
- Work and Caring Commitments
- Interaction and Socialising
- Resources
- SEND
- Lack of services/ community support

What are the impacts of low level communication/ language development for our students?

- Emotional and mental health issues
- Lower attainment and prospects
- Relationship and Communication Issues
- Poor health outcomes
- Additional pressure on school and agencies

How can low levels of communication/ language development be eliminated?

- Changing the curriculum
- Collaborative/ multi agency working
- Community Input
- Supporting parents
- Building understanding and relationships
- Improved monitoring of child development
- Early intervention

How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

- Clarity of roles
- Improved communication
- Funding
- Positive relationships with employers
- Flexible working
- Local curriculum, local context, local need
- Outward Facing Culture

Headline Feedback – Stakeholder Engagement

- Importance of communication and positive relationships
- Need to understand pressures on families
- Importance of partnership and community support
- Need to listen to the child's and parent's voice
- The importance of teaching and support tailored to the needs of the individual child
- Need to provide opportunities for social interaction and the development of speaking and listening skills
- Promote the importance of reading
- Design a curriculum meaningful for all children
- Celebrate achievement

Lived Experience

Pupil Voice

2.54 Pupil voice was captured in two ways: firstly by face to face group meetings in schools. Approximately 120 pupils were involved in face to face meetings from 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools from Reception to Year 11.

2.55 Pupils targeted for pupil voice were selected by the schools because they were at risk of disengaging from education; either because their attendance was low and/ or previously they had been suspended from school.

2.56 The second method of capturing pupil was via a digital questionnaire. Three questionnaires were created with multiple choice replies and was sent out to all schools, HAF providers, Youth Providers, SBC Early Help and Social Care Teams to support the response

2.57 78 primary responses were received (88% from Myton Park; 94% answered No to free school meals) and 24 secondary responses were received (42% from Hartwell School; 29% answered No to free school meals).

2.58 The questions asked were the same for each pupil voice meeting and similar questions were asked via the digital questionnaire. The questions and responses are set out at **Appendix 4**.

Key themes from Pupil Voice

- Some pupils believed teaching strategies could be refined to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage listening and strengthen understanding.
- Many pupils reported that staff who forged a positive relationship with pupils were more effective teachers. Those members of staff who had less positive relationships with pupils were less likely to engage them.
- As a result of pupil voice meetings, more young carers were identified.
- Some pupils stated that the curriculum did not engage them and would welcome more opportunities which they believed were more relevant for future employment such as development of retail, business and finance skills.
- A small but significant minority of pupils recognised that self-regulating their behaviour was a challenge and requested more opportunities in school to manage their emotions. For example access to a punch bag, kick-boxing or boxing.
- Many pupils did not engage with school clubs during lunchtime or after school, as they believed the offer did not match their needs or interests. Examples of the activities requested included: kick boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Some pupils requested more opportunities to celebrate achievements. Although these opportunities were in place in school they asked for even more of them.
- Several pupils noted that it wasn't clear to them how the curriculum would help them to secure employment and wanted clearer pathways to careers earlier on in their school journey.
- Distraction at school was cited as the main thing getting in the way of learning at primary and secondary. At primary, tiredness and hunger were the next reasons given. At secondary, anxiety and relationship with the teacher were cited with social media highlighted as a distraction at home
- At both primary and secondary, pupils felt that school did not provide the activities they were interested in
- At both primary and secondary pupils had positive aspirations for their future learning and employment

Headline Feedback – Pupil Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Impact of caring responsibilities
- Impact of technology
- Need to manage own feelings
- Value of celebration and reward
- Value of after school clubs

Parent/ Carer Voice

2.59 Parent/carer voice was captured in two ways: firstly by face to face group meetings in schools. Approximately 40 parent/ carers were involved in face to face meetings from 4 primary schools and 4 secondary schools; the age of their children ranged from Reception to Year 11.

2.60 Many (but not all) parent/ carers targeted for parent/ carer voice were selected by each of the schools because their children were at risk of disengaging from education; either because their attendance was low and/ or previously they had been suspended from school.

2.61 The second method of capturing parent/ carer voice was via a digital questionnaire with multiple choice and was sent out to all schools, HAF providers, Youth Providers, SBC Early Help and Social Care Teams to support the response.

2.62 146 responses were received (10% from highest primary – Durham Lane; 8% from highest secondary – Outwood Bishopsgarth; 69% answered No to free school meals).

2.62 Finally, the Stockton Parent Carer Forum sought views from their 1800 members.

2.63 The questions asked were the same for each pupil voice meeting and similar questions were asked via the digital questionnaire and Parent/ Carer Forum questionnaire. The questions and responses for the digital survey are set out at **Appendix 5** and the questions and responses for the Parent Carer Forum questionnaire are set out **Appendix 6**.

Key themes from Parent/Carer Voice

- Many parents believed they did not have the skills to support their children's needs at home for the following:
 - to manage behaviour effectively
 - to support mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels
 - to develop language skills
- Some parents reported they didn't fully understand the range of career pathways available for their child
- Challenges regarding communication were a recurring theme between the school and parent/ carers and vice versa
- Parents highlighted the importance of individually tailored, practical and one to one learning
- Parents also commented that distractions at school and relationships with teachers sometimes got in the way of learning; home pressures and lack of time to help with school work were also highlighted

Key Themes from the Parent Carer Forum Questionnaire

How does your child learn best?

Calm environment, in a variety of ways - hands on, visually, practical, one to one and recognising that each child is an individual

What gets in the way of learning?

Noise, staff absence, large classes, poor behaviour, pressure, anxiety, needs not being met

What does a good school day look like for you?

Happy to go to school, no meltdowns, engaging

What does a bad school day look like for you?

Anxiety / refusing to attend, disruption, lack of understanding, meltdowns

What is your ambition for your child?

Survive education, happy and fulfilled, to thrive and enjoy learning

How do you link with the school? Does it work? And how could it improve?

Mixed experiences, a lot of communication by phone, email, positive references to class dojo, facebook groups, school needs to listen to parents more

How could attendance be improved?

Meeting need, removing barriers, help with anxiety and counselling, more flexibility, positive feedback, tailored support, not just focusing on the academic, listen to parents, more understanding and support

How could communications skills in children be improved?

Access to speech and language therapists, visual and practical learning, advice to parents on methods and skills, recognising technology as a communication vehicle, meeting individual needs, kindness and respect, make learning fun, more SALT visits

Parent Carer Forum - Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Survey

2.64 Parent Carer Forum feedback from their EBSA survey is reproduced at **Appendix 7**. This reveals that many parents/ carers feel that there is limited support from school with most parents having to find help themselves. There were also mixed responses about the support received and a recognition that there needed to be more understanding, awareness and support in general.

Headline Feedback – Parent Carer Voice

- Importance of positive relationships
- Importance of calm environments
- Value of good transitions
- Importance of strong communication
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on behaviour
- Ambition and aspiration
- Value of multi-agency support

Conclusion

2.65 Significant efforts are being made to narrow the gap in educational attainment across schools and services within the local authority and wider services across the region, including the voluntary and charity sector. Our findings have established that sometimes these approaches are not coherently focused and may not fully meet the individual needs of our children and their families. This appreciative inquiry, through the voices of our children and their families, has been instrumental in helping to fine-tune these strategies and securing buy-in from a wide range of stakeholders to implement the actions identified. Ongoing future monitoring, analysis and evaluation will establish if these refreshed approaches strengthen the impact made.

Recommendations

That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council works collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to deliver the following shared objectives:

1. Improve attendance

Support schools to improve attendance:

- Encourage school leaders' use of the Attendance Self Evaluation Toolkit to identify what is working well, and areas which could be developed
- Promote an inclusive and relevant curriculum - where a young person wants to attend
- Work with the Team Around the School Service.
- Ensure that schools are equipped to deal with health issues.
- Identify individual barriers to attendance to better target support and intervention with specific reference to young carers

2. Forge positive relationships

Ensure that school culture proactively forges positive relationships between pupils, staff and parent/ carers:

- Promote respectful behaviours from all partners including teachers.
- Involve parents in school life.
- Extend opportunities for enhanced transition.

3. Improve communication

Design, deliver and support parent/carer communication strategies:

- Use new technologies and apps.
- Implement communication strategies early ensuring that good communication is embedded across the school community.
- Consider single points of contact and how best to communicate (not relying on technology alone).
- Offer parent/ carer engagement training for all staff.

4. Identify and support young carers

- Raise awareness of young carer identification and support for pupils.
- Extend the range of opportunities for young carers to link with others socially.

5. Managing emotions

Strengthen environment and opportunities for pupils to manage emotions:

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme
- Design and delivery of courses to meet pupil need and support parents, with specific reference to:
 - managing behaviour effectively.
 - supporting mental health and wellbeing – especially to de-escalate heightened behaviour or to reduce stress levels.
 - positive parenting skills.
- Strengthen the use of pupil voice to support development of school environments which better support them to manage their emotions.

6. Refine teaching strategies

Further refine teaching strategies to improve lesson enjoyment, encourage speaking and listening and strengthen understanding also ensuring that teaching is tailored to the needs of the individual child.

7. Developing speaking and listening skills

- Ensure the curriculum and school clubs provide opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, for example through debating clubs.
- Raise awareness of regional and national opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills

8. Extend enrichment offer

Strengthen and extend curriculum enrichment offer which better matches pupils needs and interests:

- Extend enrichment to include kick-boxing; boxing; coding; cooking clubs; sports clubs and story.
- Extend and promote the Tees Active Offer to include First Aid, paddle boards (team building) and extend offer within school holidays.
- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme

9. Celebrate achievement

Extend the range of opportunities to celebrate achievement including recognition for out of school activities and engagement with local, regional and national awards and competitions.

10. Enhance curriculum development

Work with partners and labour markets, making more explicit links to future employment.

- Innovate a local curriculum.

11. Strengthen understanding of career pathways

Clarify pathways to careers early in school life:

- Design and delivery of courses to clarify current career pathways for pupils and parents, including vocational careers and options other than traditional routes.
- Employment & Training Hub to link with schools to notify parents of apprenticeships events.
- Promote aspirational/motivational approaches.
- Strengthen links between schools/parents/careers advisor.
- Share best practice regarding "careers" evenings/ events in primary and secondary schools.
- Invite parents into school who have unusual careers.
- Educate parents on opportunities post 16.

12. Strengthen transition arrangements

Ensure that transition arrangements better fits bespoke pupil needs, with specific reference to vulnerable pupils:

- Ensure plans are put in place well in advance of any transition.
- Consider transition to post-16 and post-18/19 as well as primary and secondary and school readiness.
- Consider transition between year groups as appropriate.

13. Enhance skills to respond to special needs

Increase range of opportunities to enhance skills in mainstream schools to respond to Special Educational Needs (SEN), Child Protection Plans (CPP) and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA):

- Share best practice of integrating SEN pupils into mainstream schools.
- Promote vocational opportunities.

14. Review behaviour policies

Review behaviour policies to ensure that they are appropriate and proportionate and that inclusion policies align with behaviour policies:

- What happens when a young person is removed from the classroom. Where do they go? What teaching takes place?

15. Embed and extend pastoral support

Embed and extend pastoral support in schools targeted to need.

- Engage with the Healthy Schools Programme and Healthy Settings Programme.

16. Strengthen support for parent/carers to develop language and reading skills

Design and deliver courses and activities to develop reading and language skills.

- Promote Functional English Courses.
- Invite parents/ carers to support reading groups at primary school.
- Promote reading through free Enrichment/after school clubs.
- Ensure parents understand the importance of reading.
- Use school social media to help parents/carers learn
- Ensure materials are easy read/jargon free to involve parent/carers.
- Key messages being shared from antenatal contact.
- Work with Read Easy Charity - helping people learn to read.

17. Review cost of living responses to diminish impact

Review Cost of Living responses to diminish its impact, with specific reference to period poverty, food poverty and school uniform:

- Work with Child Poverty Network.
- Work with schools to better promote/communicate Cost of Living interventions.
- Encourage all schools to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'.

Glossary

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
CIOC	Children in Our Care
CPP	Child Protection Plan
EBSA	Emotionally Based School Avoidance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

CABINET REPORT

Children & Young People
Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2022 – 2023 FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS



AGENDA ITEM
REPORT TO CABINET
15 FEBRUARY 2024
REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Children & Young People - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 2022 – 2023 FOR VULNERABLE PUPILS

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

The annual report on standards for vulnerable groups across the borough enables Cabinet to monitor standards and achievement and to evaluate the impact of local authority monitoring, challenge, intervention, and support.

SUMMARY

This report presents a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2022 – 2023 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It is informed by the latest available data, some of which remains unvalidated and compared to national averages where they exist. It includes performance outcomes for:

1. Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding;
2. Performance by gender;
3. Black and Minority Ethnic children;
4. Children and Young People in Our Care ;
5. Children with Special Needs;
6. Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The annual report on standards for vulnerable groups across the borough enables Cabinet to monitor standards and achievement and to evaluate the impact of local authority monitoring, challenge, intervention, and support.

Recommendations

- Cabinet to note and comment as appropriate on standards and achievement across the Borough for vulnerable groups of children.
- Cabinet to note the strong overall performance of Stockton schools at both primary and secondary phases.
- Cabinet to work undertaken to further reduce educational attainment gap.

DETAIL

1. In Stockton in 2023:

- a. 9,196 of Stockton's 29,268 pupils, who are considered for Pupil Premium, are classified as disadvantaged, this is 31.4% of the cohort. **This is 4.7% higher than the national average of 26.7% (Bibliography - 1).**
- b. 26.8% of pupils in primary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). **This is 2.8% higher than the national average of 24% (2).**
- c. 26.5% of pupils in secondary schools are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). **This is 3.8% higher than the national average of 22.7% (2).**
- d. 1.37% pupils are identified as Children in Our Care (CIOC). **This is 0.66% higher than the national average of 0.71%.**
- e. 4,028 of Stockton's 32,300 pupils are classified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support provision, this is 12.5% of the cohort. **This is 0.5% lower than the national average of 13% (1).**
- f. 1,399 of Stockton's 32,300 pupils are classified as having SEN Education Health and Care Plan provision (EHCP), this is 4.3% of the cohort. **This is 0.1% higher than the national average of 4.2% (1).**
- g. 7.5% of pupils in primary schools have a first language other than English. **This is 14.5% lower than the national average of 22% (1).**
- h. 7.0% of pupils in secondary schools have a first language other than English. **This is 11.1% lower than the national average of 22% (1).**
- i. **12% of pupils in North East are identified as long-term disadvantaged(3).** The highest percentage is in London (15%). Long-term disadvantage varies considerably across the country.
- j. Disadvantaged pupils tend to do worse than their better-off peers.
- k. Those who are disadvantaged for the longest time do worst of all.
- l. 2020/21 data (4) evidences **37.3% of children in Stockton are living in poverty,** compared to 27% in the UK. This is an increase of 11.8% points since 2014/15, compared to a UK decrease of 2% points for the same period.

DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

2. Disadvantaged Pupils in this report are defined as those in receipt of Free School Meals for the last 6 years, subject to Pupil Premium funding.

3. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. 2023 Stockton DS (Glossary Appendix 1) pupil attainment has improved compared to Stockton 2022 in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 Writing
 - b. The attainment of DS pupils in Stockton is higher than the national average for DS pupils in 7 of the 13 benchmarks across primary and secondary phases.
 - c. The Stockton 2023 DS/ National NDS gap is closing most in Early Years, compared to 2022.
 - d. All Stockton 2023 NDS primary attainment outcomes are above national average
 - e. Secondary KS4 DS (4+EM) and DS Early Years Good Level of Development ranked second against North East regional benchmarks.
 - f. Both NDS KS1 Reading and Maths at the Expected level or above ranked first against North East Regional benchmarks.
4. All the following approaches have supported these improvements:
 - a. A relentless focus on closing the educational attainment gap in all our networks including:
 - o Headteacher networks
 - o English Leader Networks
 - o Maths Leader Network
 - o Closing the Gap Clusters
 - o Equalities Networks
 - o Early Years Networks
 - o Library Service.
 - o Network CPD is fine-tuned to include evidence -based strategies, interventions and resources which impact positively.
 - b. Robust challenge and support to strengthen the impact on pupil outcomes via school adviser Monitoring and Evaluation Reviews and Local Development Partner visits.
 - c. Bespoke design of training programmes to support schools in reducing barriers to achievement, including Improving Educational Outcomes 5-7 programme.
 - d. Comprehensive identification of challenges which impact pupils' educational achievement for all schools across Stockton, then matching training to this need.

5. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. The Stockton 2023 DS/ NDS gap is widening compared to Stockton 2022 DS/NDS gap in most areas across primary and secondary phases.
- b. Only about 4 in 10 DS pupils at the end of KS1 have developed the reading, writing and maths knowledge and skills they need for KS2.
- c. DS KS1 attainment and KS2 progress and attainment in Reading, is a high priority.
- d. These schools largely serve more complex communities with higher percentages of pupils who are disadvantaged, SEN, English as an Additional Language or have public health and/ or social care involvement (Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection). Many pupils thus have multiple vulnerabilities. Teacher recruitment/ retention and highly mobile pupil populations are also a challenge in these schools.

GENDER

6. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. The attainment of boys in Stockton improved in 2023 compared to 2022, particularly in KS1 reading and KS2 writing.
- b. The attainment of boys in Stockton improved in 8 of the 13 benchmarks across all key phases compared to 2022.
- c. The boy/ girl gap within Stockton is closing compared to Stockton 2022 in almost all KS2 and KS4 measures.
- d. The outcomes of boys in Stockton compares favourably against national measures in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 and KS4 attainment.
- e. The outcomes of girls in Stockton compares favourably against national measures in Early Years, KS1 and KS2 (other than in Reading) at the Expected Level and KS4 attainment.
- f. The Stockton boy/ girl gap is narrower compared to the national boy/ girl gap in KS2 attainment at the Expected level, KS1-2 progress Reading and Maths and both KS4 (4+EM) and KS4 Progress 8 measures.
- g. Boys KS2 Writing at the Expected Level and above ranked first against North East regional benchmarks.
- h. Boys KS4 attainment ranked first against North East regional benchmarks
- i. Girls' attainment in Early Years and KS1 Reading and Maths at the Expected Level and above ranked first against North East regional benchmarks.

7. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT - CHALLENGES

- a. Girls reading is an area of focus in KS2. In 2023, about 1 in 4 girls at the end of KS2 had not developed the reading knowledge and skills they need for the next stage in their education.
- b. Girls KS2 Reading attainment at the Expected Level ranked eleventh against North East regional benchmarks. This is not typical in Stockton.
- c. Stockton girls KS1-2 progress is lower than national in Reading, Writing and Maths.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC CHILDREN (BME)

8. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Significant improvements for BME pupils in Early Years compared to the previous year; the BME/ WBRI gap is also closing.
- b. Both BME and WBRI groups of pupils made strong improvements in KS1 Reading compared to 2022.
- c. The 2023 BME/ WBRI gap is closing within Stockton compared to Stockton 2022 in Early Years and most KS2 measures.
- d. The Stockton 2023 BME outcomes are higher than 2023 National BME against all the benchmarks identified, other than KS1-2 progress Reading. The most positive comparison is KS4 Grade (4+EM) (+8.2%).
- e. The Stockton 2023 WBRI is higher than 2023 National WBRI against all the benchmarks identified below, other than KS1-2 progress Reading and KS4 P8(-0.11).
- f. Stockton's BME/ WBRI gap is narrower than the BME/ WBRI national gap for 5 of the 13 identified measures.

- g. Stockton BME outcomes rank first of the twelve North East local authorities for KS2 CRWM at the Expected level or above and KS4 Grade (4+EM).
- h. Stockton WBRI outcomes ranked first of the twelve North East local authorities in KS1 Maths at the Expected Level and above.

9. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

BME KS1-2 Reading progress is an area of focus

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE

10. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Children in Care in Stockton achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of reception is above the national figure for Children in Care (CiC) nationally
- b. All outcomes at Key Stage 1 are in line with or above the national figure for CiC nationally
- c. All outcomes at Key Stage 2 are well above the national figure for CiC nationally
- d. At Key Stage 4, the percentage of CIOC achieving Level 5-9 in English and Maths is above the percentage for CiC nationally. The progress 8 measure is the same for Stockton CiC and CiC nationally
- e. The data for CiC achieving Level 4-9 in English and Maths has not yet been published.
- f. At Key stage 4 (Level 5-9 in English and Maths) the gap between CIOC and all pupils nationally is variable due to the changing assessment criteria following the COVID pandemic. However, the gap in 2019 was 36.1%, the gap has narrowed this year to 30.7%.

11. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. Outcomes at GLD. Schools are reluctant to predict that children will achieve GLD at an early stage and are extremely cautious. This makes it difficult to ensure that the appropriate interventions are in place
- b. This year, progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was slightly below what we would expect however outcomes are excellent
- c. Attendance is still below pre-pandemic levels
- d. We are seeing more children struggling with the demands of school, experiencing social, emotional, and mental health difficulties.
- e. There has been a lack of educational psychologist support and we have struggled to acquire support for supply agencies

Virtual School Extended Duties for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW) Data available for Children in Need (CIN) and children on child protection plans (CP)

12. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. Attainment and progress for CWSWs within the primary phase is typically stronger than for CWSWs nationally.
- b. CP did slightly better than CIN last year by the end of KS2 – is this due to the additional focus given by the CP process? If so, it mirrors the improved performance of CIOC last year (who performed almost as well as Stockton All pupils by the end of KS2) and suggests that an increased oversight pays dividends.

- c. Although not shown by the academic data, it is worth noting that the CWSW cohort is now much more visible due to the Vulnerable Childrens Database (VCD) and the opportunities taken this year to raise their profile. Social Care are showing a growing interest in learning more about education so that they may support CWSW better. Over the last year, we have identified and developed more opportunities for education and social care to work together, e.g., through development of CP and CIN plans.
- d. Recent work with education and social care colleagues shows that there is a clear appetite across both sectors for improving the way they work together.

13. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. CWSW still do significantly worse academically than non-CWSW (and were also significantly behind CIOC by the end of KS2).
- b. Attendance is a big issue (around 6% lower for CIN and CP than the figure for All pupils at primary; around 18% lower for CIN at secondary; around 26% lower for CP at secondary).
- c. Exclusions (both fixed term and permanent) are a big challenge. CWSW make up a disproportionate number of those suspended or permanently excluded.
- d. There appears to be a clear divide between the performance of CWSW in the primary and secondary phases. Identifying the possible reasons behind this would be complex (not least because not all factors will be school-related) but it is a challenge we should be considering.

CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS HAVING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- 14. **Overall:** In Stockton-on-Tees 16.8% of pupils have a statutory plan of SEN (EHC plan) or are receiving SEN support (previously school action and school action plus). This compares to an average of 17.3% across All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 15. **EHCps:** Across All English authorities, the proportion of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans ranges from 1.8% to 6.6%. Stockton-on-Tees has a value of 4.3%, compared to an average of 4.4% in All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 16. **SEN Support:** For SEN support the proportion for All English authorities ranges from 5.3% to 21.8%. Stockton-on-Tees has a value of 12.5%, compared to an average of 13.0% in All English authorities. This represents a further increase year on year since 2018/19.
- 17. **CIOC:** In Stockton-on-Tees, 25.2% of looked after children are on SEN support, compared to 26.3% in All English authorities. 27.0% of looked after children in Stockton-on-Tees have an EHC Plan, compared to 31.5% in All English authorities.
- 18. **CIN:** In All English authorities, 21.1% of Children in Need are on SEN support and 27.3% an EHC plan. In Stockton-on-Tees, 20.5% of children in need are on SEN support and 21.8% of children in need have an EHC plan.

19. **Primary Need:** In Stockton-on-Tees the most frequent primary need in **primary schools** is Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) with 33.6% of SEN pupils having this as their primary need. The second most frequent need in primary schools is Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) with 14.3% of SEN pupils having this recorded as their primary need.
20. This differs in **secondary schools** with 19.6% of SEN Students having Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) as the most frequent primary need, followed closely by SEMH with 18.9% of SEN Students having this as their primary need. In **specialist provisions** in Stockton-on-Tees this differs again with 20% of students there having MLD as their primary need followed by 19.6% with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
21. **Placement:** The majority of children with an EHCP are placed in Specialist provision (32.9%) meaning that this proportion of children will not have access to a full curriculum, therefore nor will they complete assessments in the same way that their contemporaries do. This compares with 21.9% of children with an EHCP who attend a mainstream school.
22. **Statutory Deadlines:** In Stockton-on-Tees, 95.2% were issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptional cases where LAs are allowed to exceed the 20-week time limit, compared to the All English authorities average of 55.2%. Including exceptions, 77.9% were issued within 20 weeks, compared to the All English authorities average of 52.6%. **This has placed Stockton-on-Tees in the top five councils nationally for meeting its statutory deadlines.**
23. **EHCPs - WHAT HAS WORKED WELL**
 - a. KS1 maths has increased and is now in line with national figures
 - b. KS2 Reading has increased and in line with national figures
 - c. KS2 maths has again increased and is above national figures
 - d. KS2 CRWM has increased and is in line with national figures
 - e. KS1-2 Progress in Reading has increased and is in line with national figures
 - f. KS1-2 Progress in Writing has remained the same but also remains above national figures
 - g. KS1-2 Progress in Maths has increased slightly but has remained above national figures
 - h. KS4 Grade 4+ (E+M) has increased and is above national figures
 - i. KS4 Progress 8 has increased and is now only slightly below national figures
24. All the following approaches have supported these improvements:
 - a. Caseworkers are allocated specific schools now, which means that they know their caseloads better than ever before and thus can provide greater support and challenge. Schools have been very appreciative of this change, and we will continue to build on this success. The additional gain here is that we are becoming aware sooner of children who are bubbling up the system and can put support in place faster. We have worked on developing caseworker 'ownership' of their own caseload over the year, which also links in with the new Local Area SEND Ofsted Framework, where they will meet with inspectors to discuss individual cases and face questions back from them. This work is ongoing.
 - b. This last year we have had a concerted effort to turn around Reviews in a much timelier fashion (praised by DfE who said they did not know of another LA in such a favourable position).
 - c. Greater focus on outcomes within EHCPs at each Review.

- d. We now track outcomes from EHCPs, and this informs subsequent input and involvement around reviews.

25. EHCPs - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- a. GLD remains consistent but below national levels
- b. KS1 Reading has fallen in line with national figures
- c. KS1 Writing remains in line with national figures
- d. KS 2 Writing remains static and slightly below national figures

26. SEN Support – WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. KS1 Reading has increased and now matches national figures
- b. KS1 Writing remains same and is in line with national figures
- c. KS1 maths has increased but is still behind national figures
- d. KS2 Reading, Writing and maths have all increased and are all above national figures
- e. KS2 CRWM is significantly above national figures
- f. KS1-2 Progress in Reading, Writing and maths have improved slightly and are in line with national figures
- g. KS4 Grade 4+ (E&M) has increased year on year and is above national figures

27. SEN Support - AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

GLD has fallen slightly and the gap with national figures has increased also.

CHILDREN FROM SERVICE FAMILIES

28. From the DfE's Pupil Premium data based on spring 2023 schools census the total number of children from service families in Stockton was 396 pupils; 200 were registered in primary schools, 188 in secondary schools and 8 in a special school.
29. The number of children from service families in each primary school, including special schools, eligible for this Pupil Premium funding ranged from 0 to 17 pupils and 0 to 29 pupils for secondary schools.
30. According to the 2023 spring census there are 46 primary schools, 13 secondary schools and 4 special schools which have children from service families on their roll.
31. As cohorts in each school are very small, analysis of academic achievement and pupil need is carried out on a school-by-school basis.

32. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. We have regularly attended the Ministry of Education Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) which includes senior leadership membership from local authorities across the United Kingdom.
- b. Through this partnership a wide range of effective practice and useful resources have been signposted, then shared via our networks with school leaders and governors including:
 - o Armed Forces Covenant Duty Toolkit
 - o Thriving Lives Toolkit
 - o Family Federations links for the Army, Navy, and RAF

- CPD offers
- Children of Service Personnel information and guidance from Oxford Local Authority
- c. In addition, we have supported MODLAP in capturing Service Children voice via promotion of the national Voice of Schools Survey across the borough.
- d. Where appropriate, school advisers challenge and support schools' leaders on the targeted support and intervention of this cohort.

33. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

- 34. As Children of Service Personnel cohorts are so small, securing statistically viable data is a challenge.
- 35. Although Closing the Gap Clusters and, when appropriate, Personal Development Networks share a variety of toolkits, resources, information and guidance, these events are not necessarily attended by the schools with higher cohorts of Children of Service Personnel on their roll.

PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

36. Context

- 37. The top three reasons for permanent exclusion during the academic year 2022/23 was persistent disruptive behaviour or physical abuse against adults or peers. Persistent disruptive behaviour was the biggest reason for permanent exclusion in secondary aged pupils. Physical assaults against adults was the most common reason for permanent exclusion in primary aged pupils.
- 38. We have continued to see permanent exclusions for a 'one off incident' where a child has breached a school's behaviour policy. Any such instances are always looked at carefully by the Local Authority and we continue to work with schools to consider alternative methods to permanent exclusion.

39. WHAT HAS WORKED WELL

- a. We have continued to have no permanent exclusions from our special schools this year.
- b. Several permanent exclusions were avoided through the vulnerable learners and placement & governance teams collaborating with schools to support, or by offering rigorous challenge at pupil disciplinary meetings for permanent exclusions.

40. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT – CHALLENGES

41. Exclusions

- a. During the academic year 2022/23, Stockton received 126 permanent exclusions. 15 of these were for primary aged pupils and 111 were for secondary aged pupils.
- b. Unfortunately, this year, we have continued to see permanent exclusions of primary aged children. We continue to use our Pathway Development Centre (PDC) Model to support children in KS1 & KS2 who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of permanent exclusion and require a short-term placement within PDCs.
- c. In Stockton boys were more likely to be excluded than girls. However, we have seen a rise in the number of girls permanently excluded and at the end of the year the number of girls who were permanently excluded had risen by 50%.

- d. Stockton 2023 permanent exclusions during the academic year 2022-2023 are greater than Stockton permanent exclusions recorded during the academic year 2021-2022*.
- e. There has been an increase in exclusions both regionally and nationally, particularly in Key Stage 3. In Stockton last academic year pupils in year seven and pupils in year ten had the highest number of permanent exclusions.

42. **Suspensions**

- a. We have continued to see an increase in the use of suspensions within the borough since we had a full return to school at the beginning of the Autumn 2021 term.
- b. Stockton suspensions during the academic year 2022-2023 are greater than Stockton suspensions recorded during the academic year 2021-2022*.
- c. The number of days lost to learning is high and can equate to weeks, months and academic years of education lost when looking at the total.
- d. By the end of the summer term 2023 the days lost to learning in our secondary schools equate to over fifty-four academic years of learning.
- e. By the end of summer term 2023 the days lost to learning in our primary schools equate to over one and a half years of academic years of learning.

ATTENDANCE

- 43. The latest DfE published data is for autumn term 2022 and spring term 2023 combined. The information details the data for overall absence, persistent absence (more than 10% absence) and the newest category of absence known as severe absence. Severe absence is pupils who have 50% absence or more.

44. **WHAT HAS WORKED WELL**

45. Primary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in primary schools is 5.6% and is 0.4% better than the national average of 6% absence. In comparison to local statistical data Stockton is performing better than both the regional average of 5.8% and national 6%.
- b. Persistent absence is 16% and is better than the national average of 17.3% and the regional average of 17.1%. Stockton has the lowest rate of persistent absence in the Tees Valley.
- c. Severe absence is 0.7% and is the same as the national average.

46. Secondary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in Stockton secondary schools is 9.7% ; this is better than the Tees Valley average of 10.2%
- b. Persistent absence in Stockton is 28.8%; this is better than the Tees Valley average of 29.3%.
- c. Severe absence in Stockton (3.8%) which is lower than the Tees Valley combined with 4.65% of pupils who are severe absentees.

47. Special School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Stockton special schools' overall absence is 13.1% and is marginally better than the national average of 13.2%,

- b. Persistent absence in Stockton special schools is 33.8% and is better than the national average of 39.1%. Stockton special schools perform more favourably than the regional and Tees Valley averages of 35.8% and 34.3% respectively.

48. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

Stockton has one PRU, overall absence is 40.7% which is the same as the national average 40.7% and better than the regional average of 42.9%.

49. **AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT - CHALLENGES**

50. Primary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Severe absence is 0.7%, which is higher than the regional and Tees Valley rate of 0.5%.
- b. Stockton has higher levels of severe absentees than local authorities locally and regionally combined. One hundred and twelve primary school age pupils in Stockton are severely absent having more than 50% of absence from school.

51. Secondary School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Overall absence in Stockton secondary schools is 9.7% and is higher than the national average of 8.7% and the regional average of 9.4%.
- b. Stockton Persistent absence of 28.8% is less favourable than both the national average of 25.2% and the regional average of 27.5%.
- c. Severe absence is 3.8% and is worse than both the national and regional levels of 3.1% and 3.6% respectively.
- d. The actual number of pupils in Stockton who fall into the severe absence category is four hundred and seventy-three secondary age pupils who have high levels of absence and missed more than half of their schooling.

52. Special School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. Stockton special schools' overall absence is less favourable than the regional average of 12.8% and the Tees Valley average of 12.2%.
- b. Severe absence is 7.6% and is worse than the national, regional and Tees Valley rates of 6.1%, 6.3% and 5.9% respectively. The number of pupils in Stockton who have missed more than half of their schooling is forty-seven.

53. Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) School Attendance: autumn and spring terms 2022-23

- a. The Tees Valley combined PRU attendance average is 37.1%.
- b. Persistent absence is 96.5% and is significantly worse than the national, regional and Tees Valley averages of 81.2%, 84.4% and 84.4% respectively.
- c. Severe absence is 47.1% and is worse than the regional and Tees Valley averages of 40%, and 35.7% respectively. The number of pupils who missed more than half of their schooling in Stockton was forty-one. National data was not available.

54. WHAT WE ARE DOING TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

55. Universal

- a. More granular school level analysis of data indicates that schools serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils have tended to secure lower overall outcomes.
- b. The current Children's Services Transformation has strong potential to strengthen the targeted multi-agency support, particularly between Education, Social Care and SEN so services are more coherent and effective.
- c. A scrutiny with a focus of Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment has been scoped; the scrutiny involves a robust Appreciative Inquiry. The overall aim of the project is to work collaboratively with schools and partners to explore what good practice already exists and what could still be done to support of families, establish innovative ways of working and make better use of resources through a renewed approach.
- d. There are several schools serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils where outcomes have been more successful; these schools have been engaged to share their effective practice.
- e. Continue to identify and make visible vulnerable group cohorts.
- f. Continue to promote the need to plan strategically to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
- g. Effective practice from a range of services is shared more widely via Networks and Briefings including:
 - o Headteacher networks
 - o English Leader Networks
 - o Maths Leader Network
 - o Closing the Gap Clusters
 - o EAL and Equalities Networks
 - o Early Years Networks
 - o Personal Development Networks
 - o SENCO leadership briefings
 - o Governor Briefings
 - o Designated Teacher Termly Network Meetings
 - o Trauma Informed Practice in Stockton (TIPS) Network Meetings
- h. Networks and CPD is fine-tuned to include evidence -based strategies and interventions which impact positively on identified priorities including our Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed offer, Virtual Reality Headset training and Virtual School CPD Offer to schools, foster carers and social workers
- i. Corporate Social Responsibility Networks have been engaged aiming to recruit reading mentors from local businesses for targeted schools.
- j. The full range of challenges for our disadvantaged pupils identified by schools across the borough has been collated, analysed and shared across services.
- k. Stockton's Healthy Schools Programme multi-agency offer and accreditation is offered universally and targeted to those schools experiencing the most challenges.
- l. A comprehensive Attendance Strategy has been co-designed in collaboration with our key partners which aims to address the significant challenges we have regarding attendance. This includes promotion of more effective attendance procedures which address the barriers to attendance (rather than simply stepping through the procedures towards legal action).
- m. A strengthened, better targeted marketing and communication strategy for our training and support has been designed to share opportunities more widely across services and our schools.

56. Targeted Support and Intervention

A summary of the range of support and intervention to address these challenges is below.

a. Bespoke targeted programmes aligned to need

- Improving Educational Outcomes 5-7 with a focus on reading progress and attainment
- Leading Reading (new for 2023-24)
- 'Boost Reading' Intervention to all our CIOC in years 1 and 2 using the school led tutoring grant to fund a teacher to deliver this intervention
- Letterbox programme

b. Targeted support, monitoring and intervention

- Targeted promotion of networks, CPD and support to identified schools.
- Drop-in support for parent/ carers to ensure needs are being met early on before crisis
- Recovery premium is given directly to schools, who are using this funding to deliver individually targeted and group interventions that are monitored through the personal education plan (PEP)
- Attendance data is collected weekly and reviewed by the Virtual School fortnightly to support and challenge where necessary. There is a robust attendance procedure (detailed in the Virtual School Head Teachers Report 2022-23) that is followed and monitored.
- Weekly SENCo drop ins with key members of staff
- Virtual School monitoring cycle to identify CIOC in need of support through the Virtual School Data Dashboard and regular Virtual School meetings
- Thrive assessments
- Sensory Profiling
- GCSE English Tuition

c. Partnerships with/ between schools

- Challenge and support from our Enhanced Mainstream Supports (EMS) to other schools and settings

d. Ongoing bespoke support

- Identified via School Strategy Meetings. For example via school advisers and specialist teachers

57. COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

This report is for information only; its contents cover the vulnerable group outcomes at the end of each key stage for Stockton's pupils.

58. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to the report.

59. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications to the report.

60. RISK ASSESSMENT

Educational attainment is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

61. COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

This report responds to the Policy Principles in the Council Plan:

1. Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention
2. Developing strong and healthy communities
3. Creating economic prosperity.

62. CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

The details of the performance of Looked After Children will be reported to Cabinet in December when the detailed data is available.

63. CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

There has been no consultation as this report is for information only.

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Education related: YES

Background Papers: NO

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: ALL

Property: NONE

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY

AATI:	Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed
BME:	Black and Minority Ethnic pupils
CIN:	Children in Need
CIC:	Children in Care generally
CIOC:	Children in Our Care i.e. specifically Stockton Children in Care
CPD:	Curriculum Professional Development (staff training)
CWSW:	Children With a Social Worker
DCO:	Designated Clinical Officer
DSCO:	Designated Social Care Officer
DS:	Disadvantaged pupils
DS/ NDS gap:	The difference in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and those who are non-disadvantaged.
EAL:	English as an Additional Language
EHCP:	Education Health and Care Plan
FSM:	Free School Meals
FTE:	Fixed Term Exclusions/ Suspensions
GLD:	Good Level of Development
HMI:	Her Majesty's Inspector for Ofsted
KS:	Key Stage
	1. KS 1 and 2 – primary phase
	2. KS 3, 4 and 5 – secondary phase
NDS:	Non-disadvantaged pupils
PDC:	Pathway Development Centre
PEX:	Permanent Exclusion
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
VCD:	Vulnerable Children's Database
WBRI:	White British pupils
4+ EM:	GSCE English and Maths at Grade 4 or above

APPENDIX 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(1) NCER 2023

(2) Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) 2023

www.gov.uk/publications

(3) ***The long-term consequences of long-term disadvantage:***

Report to the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

Katie Beynon

Dave Thomson

October 2022

(4) ***New End Child Poverty Coalition Briefing: North East Child Poverty Commission***
July 2022

Appendix 2

Stakeholders Engaged in the Review

Acting Headteacher - Bowesfield Primary School
Acting Headteacher - Myton Park Primary School
Acting Headteacher - Rosebrook Primary
Adult Learning & Skills Manager - SBC
Alliance Psychology
Assistant Headteacher - Egglecliffe Secondary School
Assistant Headteacher - Our Lady & St Bede's
Assistant Headteacher - St Michael's Catholic Academy
AVP English - Abbey Hill Academy
Bader Primary
Bader Primary
Cafcass
CEO Vision Academy Learning Team
Children and Young Person Services
Children North East
Children's Services - Parent Support Tiny Tots
College Principal - Bede Sixth Form College
Community & Partnership Manager – SBC
Community Engagement Officer – SBC
Community Projects Manager – SBC
Corner House Youth Project
Deputy Head - Mill Lane Primary
Deputy Head, DSL and Attendance Lead - Whinstone Primary School
Deputy Headteacher - Junction Farm Primary School
Early Years Development Adviser - SBC
Early Years Training & Development Coordinator – SBC
Eastern Ravens Trust
Education Development Adviser - SBC
Education Welfare Officer – SBC
Employment & Training Hub Manager – SBC
Fairer Stockton on Tees - SBC
Fairfield Primary School
Family Action - Operational Manager & Service Leads
Family Hub Coordinators – SBC
Family Support Advisor and Deputy DSL - Bowesfield Primary
Food Banks / Baby Banks
General Adviser 0-11
HARROGATE AND DISTRICT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
Head Teacher - Durham Lane Primary School
Headteacher - Bader Primary School
Headteacher - Kirklevington Primary
Headteacher - Layfield Primary School
Headteacher - Levendale Primary
Headteacher - The Links Primary School
Headteacher - Whitehouse Primary

Ingleby Mill Primary School
Interim Director of Children's Services
Lead Solicitor – SBC
Learning Disability & Mental Health Service Manger – SBC
Libraries Development Officer – SBC
Management Trainee - NGDP
Mental Health Support Team
NHS North East & North Cumbria
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
Parent Carer Forum
Personal Development Lead - Bede Sixth Form College
Primary Senior Leader - Whinstone Primary School
Public Health Consultant – SBC
Public Health Registrar – SBC
Roseberry Primary School
Safeguarding & Welfare Lead - Whitehouse Primary
SEND IASS Officer
Service Lead - Early Support and Projects
Service Lead - School Inclusion & Vulnerable Learning
Service Lead - Virtual School/HeadTeacher
Service Lead Education 0-11
Service Lead Education and Wellbeing
Solicitor for Children's Services
St. Patrick's Catholic College
Strategic Lead - SEND
Teacher - St John the Baptist Primary School
Team Manager - Inclusion & Vulnerable Learners - SBC
Team Manager - School Support – SBC
Team Manager - SEN Support and Assessments – SBC
Team Manger – Careers – SBC
Tees Active
TVMS Manager
Vice Principal - King Edwin School
Welfare Lead - St John the Baptist Primary School

Appendix 3

Stakeholder Feedback

Attendance

What are the barriers to attendance/ reasons for absence?

- Communication
- parent wellbeing
- poor home routines
- parent/carer relationship
- young carer
- parent view of school /past experiences
- parents don't value education
- anxiety parent/child
- bullying
- child struggling academically
- Parental mental health
- parental lack of value on education
- caring responsibilities
- attachment anxiety
- SEND emotional barriers
- SEND learning environment
- bullying
- cost of living/poverty
- are parents properly signposted?
- relationships with pupils/staff and parents/staff
- rigid applications of policies
- delays/waiting lists for interventions
- illness/medical
- extended visits abroad
- impact of covid
- home issues
- parental motivation
- means of getting to school
- distance from school
- weather
- relocation to other Las (children in temp accommodation)
- SEMH issues
- avoidance (PE)
- change staff
- sleeping issues
- homework day
- school trips
- location e.g. farming rural communities
- events in religious calendar
- anxiety - general/situational/all encompassing
- caring responsibilities
- Anxiety specifically about the pressure of academic work

- recent teacher tapp survey - 50% of HTs said there had been a huge rise in absence driven by disputes with school
- generational unemployment
- sensory overwhelm
- clothing - sensory issues, cost, cleaning of uniform
- criminal exploitation
- do schools/staff understand the lived experience of their pupils?
- not valuing education (Friday's absence) (parents)
- parental influence
- SEND
- Health
- attachment
- limited capacity of small schools - recognised a little in DFE guidance but not in Stockton's attendance processes e.g. home visits can be a massive challenge for small schools and a barrier to positive relationships
- Shame
- affordability - period poverty
- affordability - bus fare
- affordability - uniform
- other responsibilities - young carer
- changes in the family
- tiredness / hungry
- if going to be late
- no incentives - parent at home/work
- structure
- curriculum
- holiday costs
- covid response "I passed"
- parent apathy
- parental mental health
- EBSA
- practical barriers/chaotic lifestyle
- work - pressure supporting family
- work - pattern, nightshifts
- motivation - organisational skills
- reward timely
- trauma/family
- problems at home
- transport issues - lack of free travel
- transport issues - pressure on families
- transport issues - safety concerns
- start/finishing times (traffic/delays)
- period poverty - high demand at food pantries etc
- school uniform/hygiene - cleaning issues (lack of products to wash clothes/uniform)
- lack of food (going without breakfast) (food poverty)

- good solid foundations in parenting skills and accessible support, available in a timely manner
- stronger relationships between and incl home & school. Built on respect, love and mutual aims. Relationship based approaches working 'with' and providing high support along with high challenge
- periods
- physical health - parent or child
- mental health - parent or child
- poverty
- care responsibilities of child for others in the home
- parents own experience of school
- transport
- bullying
- CSE/CCE/Neglect/physical abuse
- separated parents/parental conflict
- lack of equipment
- lack of prep for secondary school
- navigating the requirements of school
- fair access panel - pupils placed without support (with complex needs)
- FAP - sharing of difficult pupils across all schools
- SEN (or perceived SEN issues)
- Lack of engagement from parents
- Lack of SEN places
- Anxiety (waiting for CAMHS support or non-engagement & cases closed)
- Thresholds for referrals - attendance/social care/CIN
- parents lack of concern about absence
- alignment of holidays
- inconsistently of implementation of fines for leave of absences across schools
- Children as carers
- mental health - adults/children
- holidays - penalty notices do not work!
- parents views on the value of education
- covid - huge effect!!
- societies view of mental health
- schools are a step shop! Educators!! Not social care
- lack of funding given to schools to address attendance
- lack of parental support
- governments campaign - improving attendance is a joke!
- staffing - recruitment/support staff really difficult
- workload of educators - lack of time for TLC
- time poor parents lack of parental contact with children to nurture
- blur education/health
- weather
- mood

- school don't ask for evidence long term conditions - used as a potential excuse
- emotional wellbeing
- lack of routines/boundaries
- bullying
- breakdown between home & school
- parental experience
- parental anxieties regarding health conditions
- young carers
- school's ability to meet the children's need (SEND)
- lack of access
- digital - lack of face to face contact
- children with long term illnesses/automatic given leave of absence without medical evidence
- chaotic home life/not enough sleep/food
- looking after parents
- barriers to getting into nursery because of SEND. School not able to meet child's needs. High need funding difficult to meet criteria. Number of children with complex needs is increasing significantly
- secondary schools - worse for attendance for children with complex needs
- difficult for parents to cope with children with complex needs
- Children with medical condition automatically get authorised absence with no medical evidence needed i.e., Asthma, Diabetes. This makes it easier for the parents to keep children absent from school.
- Emotional wellbeing and anxiety – Impact of covid.
- Boundaries and routines are not always in place within the home, this can also include primary school children as they are sometimes expected to make their own way to school.
- There can be problems for parents when trying to contact the schools to report an absence.
- Children with additional needs/SEND – not all school have the facilities to cater for their needs.
- Bullying and friendship groups can have an impact on a children's emotional wellbeing.
- Breakdown of relationships between parents/carers/professionals.
- English is not always a first language for some children and parents are left unable to read information given from school.
- Travel can have an impact on absence as some children live outside of school area and some parents do not have transport to able to take their children to school.
- If children are late for school can cause anxiety.
- Some parents may not have had a good experience of school so therefore they do not value education.
- Weather permitting will deter some children from attending school.
- Some parents maybe anxious if the child has a medical condition that the school cannot manage.

- Health needs may not have been met, some children may have hospital appointments and will be absent from school the whole day rather than send and collect.
- Discussion around their home life, a child maybe worrying what is going on.

How can absence be eliminated?

- breakfast club
- school offer
- communication
- reasonable adjustments
- the night support
- communication at transition
- praise the parents
- raise the profile of school
- consider language when communicating with parents
- understanding reason on case by case basis
- implement support plan - engagement - suitability - review
- communication
- identify the trends/theories in absence
- taking time to understand
- integrated/collaborative approach
- identifying support needs early for school holidays
- reasonable adjustments
- building relationships
- talking - parent voice/child voice
- noticing patterns
- multi-agency approach
- team around the family
- clear expectations
- consistency - with adjustments when needed
- inclusivity
- looking at the bigger picture
- clear communication - planning in advance - calendar of events
- education parents on attendance
- knowing where to go to for support
- understanding pupil's home situation's
- communicate with external agencies
- annual programme/training for VCSE on what we're able to offer
- campaign from Stockton that supports schools to raise priority of attendance - including holidays
- flowchart of support available to schools
- proactive work rather than reactive support for schools
- flexible policies
- individualized approach
- more support
- alternative education

- better relationship with parents/carers
- minimise/eliminate
- pastoral systems/culture
- proactive engagement
- easier access to services
- tailoring approach/personalised
- whole staff approach
- communication with families
- making pre-loved uniforms more accessible
- reaching 'quiet' families - reluctant or busy parents and carers
- wider sharing of food provision leaflet (Catalyst newsletters, health schools)
- building relationships with children/schools
- good start to the day. Greeting at the beginning of the day
- reasonable adjustments - more often! Bespoke
- beginning earlier support under 5's
- what if we didn't count absence
- smaller secondary schools
- alignment of school holidays
- more specialist provision
- more provision for anxious pupils (support in mainstream)
- support for pupils - improvement in access to engaging activities...
spoofs access/youth clubs - so every child has access
- agencies engaging earlier to collate support pupils & parents
- early years support - from 2 years
- better working between agencies
- consistent support - step up - step down
- engagement with parents
- money/budget
- cheaper holidays - government should fine the holiday companies for excessive charges
- understanding the lived experience of the child T/TA to have time
- CPD
- changing mindset
- public health
- have illnesses/lack of appropriate intervention - antibiotics
- open and honest
- partnership working
- whole school parent/community approach
- schools excluding children could give messages that it is okay to miss school
- be child focussed
- not possible
- too many barriers to attendance for some families - parents may have complex needs and attendance is not a priority
- attitude to lateness/absence doesn't encourage attendance
- shop insisting on correct uniform
- needs pathway back to school

- early intervention to prevent absence
- whole school approach
- enhanced curriculum/alternative
- better working relationship with parents over bullying/cyber bullying
- Be open and honest, partnership working with all professionals and parent/carers.
- Support and educate parents on the importance of attending school and the value of education.
- Whole school/ parent community approach about the importance of school.
- If the child has a health appointment to take the shortest time possible and return to school afterwards.
- Adhering to policy and procedures that are in place and make sure that parents understand and to send regular key messages to remind parents.
- Support parents/carers/children/young people to make them feel more inclusive.
- Breaking down barriers to improve communication.
- Have a key person in school for the parent/CYP to link in with.
- Parents/carer need to understand the difference in GCSE/SATS grades attendance can make.

How can school provide a welcome and supportive environment for pupils and their families?

- events/open dates
- various methods of communication
- staff visibility
- conversations & relationships
- friendly front of house staff
- relationship practice
- first point of contact to be well trounced & supportive
- communication strategy with children and parents and internally in schools
- right person at the night time involved with the child
- focus on successes
- focussed peer support
- involvement of voluntary sector
- reasonable adjustments
- knowing the families
- use of family support worker
- first point of contact to be well trounced & supportive
- contact when going well as for issues
- open-door policy - build a school community
- less formal events - coffee mornings
- use of translators (EAL)
- representation models for all
- key people on the gate morning
- good staff support for wellbeing
- meet & greets

- staff out 10 mins early
- open opportunities for conversations
- reasonable adjustments
- swift response's
- good planning (timetables)
- good communication
- accessibility e.g. parents evening, leaving siblings at home?
- build relationship with pupils and parents/carers at transaction
- work with communities ABCD
- whole school approach - restorative practice
- customer first staff training - reception / meet & greet staff
- finding common ground - flexible, language
- welcoming staff
- child approach
- improving parental engagement
- having a wellbeing recognition of emotionally based causes
- understanding the demographic
- positive communications using a range of media
- increasing links with outside community - who are community leaders or leader amongst parents/carers who can help
- ask how wider family are coping/managing at parents evening
- re-evaluating school policies - detentions/behaviour
- recognising different social needs - e.g. introverts (children express emotions in different ways)
- friendly welcome & time to talk to pupils - how has morning been?
Etc
- greeting as the first opportunity each day
- reasonable adjustments
- better transition into secondary
- use of first names
- consistent staff to build relationships
- know the pupils and the families (background) for key pupils
- open door policy
- staff who are happy, valued and enjoy their job
- wellbeing of staff
- time to listen
- ethos, culture and the staff - effective leadership
- outward facing school
- great office staff
- surveys
- involving all stakeholders
- focus on extended families
- effective communication with staff, children and parents
- culture of understanding extended communities
- restorative approach
- promotion of resilience 'it's life!'
- emotional support not very accessible particularly in secondary schools

- breakfast clubs
- getting to know every family personally
- have a dialogue with parents and children find out needs and expectations
- Public Health nurse would previously attend multi agency meetings in school with professionals for children/young people who have poor attendance. Parent would be invited to these meetings.
- PHN previously invited parents into school or complete or offer a Health Needs assessment to assure all health needs and emotional needs are being met.
- Improving relationship and understanding of the importance of education.
- Continuing rewards for good attendance and behaviour.
- Whole school launch of the importance of attendance.

How can relationships between pupils, teachers and parents be strengthened?

- family days
- communication
- positive behaviour policy
- trust
- praise
- schools offering support
- being respectful to all
- individual approach
- consistency
- collaborative approach/working together
- better communication between all involved
- strength based approach
- listening/hearing each other - allowing pupils and parents to speak
- be reasonable with expectations
- active listening
- building trust
- support and signposting to other agencies, networking
- information sharing - triangulation
- time
- ensure personalisation
- use of social media - Facebook, communication
- communicating in advance - key dates
- parent role models
- regular voice - reflection and actions
- more open door welcoming events
- respectful communication - changing terminology - I notice/I wonder/I imagine
- whole school culture's - approaches need to be the same... negative conversations
- building relationships
- PSA's - in schools - whole schools cultures
- schools being more open to different ways of working

- working together
- "would this be good enough for my child?"
- child first approach
- mutual respect
- building positive relationships
- positive experiences/visits to schools
- calls to parents to praise
- working with approach
- communication - homeschooling or exclusion should be last resort
- parents/carers meeting - signposting, providing information
- increased partnership working - schools, agencies, councillors
- breaking down barriers with Academy Trusts
- Pupil voice
- mutual trust, balance and respect
- use of first names
- building connections before content
- coffee mornings linking more with parents - lunch meals with parents
- child dev training across school staff
- respect that parents are the experts in their own lives
- EPEC - empowering parents, empowering communities
- improve communication - distinguish staff between pastoral & behaviour
- sympathise, empathise... not tolerate
- inclusivity
- support school staff - manageable workloads
- face to face meetings - taf/cin meetings online not effective
- consistency in staff
- clear expectations for pupils/parent
- what will happen if
- transition - primary schools feeding accurate information prior to transition. Challenge behaviour and attendance in primary so pupils are aware of expectations in secondary
- CPD
- Community - at all levels
- effective communication
- events
- understanding lived experiences
- curriculum
- sharing vision, ethos, culture & mission statement regularly with all stakeholders
- more in school activities for parents
- cultural event for BAME families
- cooking events
- opportunities for parents to volunteer parents as mentors - helping other parents
- Gain the voice of the child and ask why they are not attending.
- School app for attendance example is the study bug.

- Open and honest partnership working with professionals/parents/carers/CYP.
- Involve the CYP in the planned meeting so that they feel supported.
- Key member of staff who the parent/carer/CYP feel comfortable.
- Regular meetings if there is any concerns regarding absence.
- School can support with transport if needed.
- Events and celebrations for good attendance.
- Involve parents/carers and update any key information.
- Young people's focus group.
- Staff training on attendance.
- Share examples of good practice from other schools and areas.
- Make school attendance a priority.
- Contact with CYP at risk and offer further support.

Communication

What are the reasons for low level communication/ language development?

- lack of interaction/engagement between parents and children (technology takes over)
- lower expectations (parents not doing as much developmental work incl. practical e.g. toileting)
- covid/lack of socialising
- changed ways of living/shift of culture
- missed/delayed health visitor and 2 year checks
- younger mobile phone use more acceptable
- dedicated family meal times less common - traditional communication
- decline in bedtime stories - traditional communication
- decline in traditional communication
- parent capacity - single parent with multiple children / working patterns
- parents with disabilities, LD or physical
- caring responsibilities
- time/ability
- 2 parent working family - long hours limits interaction
- family dinners are less prevalent
- multiple disadvantage
- first 1000 days
- pre-natal/preparing for parenthood
- online/screen time
- focussed face time with parents
- resources - physical and financial
- poverty
- school curriculum - reading/story time
- homework clubs - free vs paid
- limited talking in the home - language development
- limited talking in the home - interactions (purposeful)
- limited talking in the home - facial expressions

- COVID - learning gaps, lack of socialisation / limited interaction
- COVID - varying levels of parental involvement and/or resources (e.g. books)
- COVID - disproportionate impact on some children / gap
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - demand on services - not able to meet needs
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - long waiting lists
- Growing number of children with SEND needs and SEMH needs - speech and language support
- Growing expectation from mainstream schools to meet need with increasing numbers/complexity of SEND - impact on progress
- Mobile phones
- lack of interaction
- role models
- too much choice - apps/Netflix
- silo viewing - no family time
- front loaded series
- family pressures - working parents
- family pressures - financial
- own space
- SEN need - s/l needs
- SEN needs - lack of comprehension
- change of family dynamic - 2 parents need to work
- change of family dynamic - working from home but not interacting with child
- rise of social media - reduce concentration span
- rise of social media - limit general knowledge and communication
- role model - what does family communication look like
- class size - opportunities to be creative
- technology
- time constraints
- lack of opportunities
- knowledge of parents/carers communication
- English not 1st language
- SEND
- poverty
- parental understanding of the importance of C&L and their role within this remit
- lack of cultural capital and experiences that aid in language development/transport limitations
- limitations in quality parental interactions with children/technology can be a barrier to this interaction/SEMH
- lack of modelling of high level vocabulary
- financial crisis /time pressures of working /"time poverty"
- time poor parents
- lack of services
- lack of family support

- front facing pushchairs
- technology
- lack of modelling
- demographic
- specific needs
- finances - experiences
- community links available
- eating together as a family - no TV no phone
- technology
- COVID - body language/masks/socialisation
- reading - books - involves other avenues e.g. news articles/sports reports
- cultural - online shopping/banking modern parents have reduced communication opportunities
- homeworking - isolation - continues into family life
- playing out - safety impedes this
- mental health - practice face to face communication
- "only" children - peer socialisation - may be good at talking to adults
- transgender - anxiety/fear of bullying
- more emphasis on physical activity - families communicating with children - not always on phones
- reading to children
- need parental engagement - parents who have low language skills themselves - need to engage in help. Difficult to get commitment of parents to engage in sickness
- lost elements of monitoring child development - health visitors - paired down service
- digital offer
- interaction (limited)
- attention (short)
- parental understanding
- parents confidence
- parental relationship with their child
- parent s reading skills
- non English speaking household - available of suitable resources

What are the impacts of low level communication/ language development for our students?

- attachment issues and sense of identity
- behaviour - due to not being able to communicate needs
- behaviour - short attention span
- lack of concentration - need quick dopamine hit
- lack of concentration - used to short inputs (videos etc)
- impacts - life changes
- impacts - relationships
- communication difficulties - lack of social skills
- communication difficulties - unable to understand body language/nuances

- communication difficulties - lower vocab level
- memory - due to lack of writing
- lower fine motor skills
- spelling and stamina in writing
- anxiety
- lower confidence - low aspirations - limited life choices into adulthood
- contextual safeguarding - organised crime/gangs
- poor school attendance/social care involvement
- high cost for statutory services
- life experiences are impacted
- ability to access the curriculum
- students less prepared for life in the wider world
- frustration - attendance
- frustration - behavioural issues
- frustration - MHWB issues - self-esteem
- frustration - MHWB issues - manifest in self-harm
- frustration - MHWB issues - low confidence - may prevent them from engaging in opportunities
- equality of access compromised
- additional pressure on schools/staff - trying to close the gap retention crisis - additional workload
- life chances potentially effected - exclusions
- life chances potentially effected - bullying - social skills less developed
- life chances potentially effected disengagement
- life chances potentially effected - impact on relationships
- attainment across curriculum
- inability to engage/concentrate at length
- lack of social interaction
- lower life expectancy
- lower attainment
- low aspiration
- quality of life and job expectations
- lack of enjoyment e.g. reading
- lack of confidence
- implications on GDP
- lack of opportunity
- lack of connection - to other people and industry
- impact on independence
- narrow choices in life
- fall behind academically
- lack of social skills
- anxiety
- embarrassment
- mental health - decline
- withdraw
- delays

- poor communication skills
- frustration which leads to conflict
- social isolation
- barrier to learning, low attainment, possible impact on future prospects
- ongoing behavioural/emotional issues
- don't necessarily have the support/expertise/funding/time to 'fix' this
- children unable to access the same curriculum as peers
- potential vulnerability/safeguarding
- in/ability to articulate own needs
- development of reasoning and understanding
- relationships
- mental health/anxiety
- aspiration
- confidence/self esteem
- restricts life chances - interviews
- lack of job readiness
- curriculum - GCSE papers = certain level of reading ability
- poor health outcomes - reading letters / appointments
- narrows opportunities
- anxiety - feeling understood or not
- anxiety - communicating when stressed
- vocational children - still exam based
- don't progress if not developing language skills - using other language skills - BSL - parity of means of communication
- impact on mental health/making friends etc. emotional health
- picking up on difficulties e.g. Dyslexia
- More likely to be a young offender
- early intervention crucial
- systemic approach - early years / junior
- late diagnosis of autism - schools need to be more proactive
- behavioural issues
- lack of awareness
- lack of confidence
- lack of life skills
- impacts on education
- friendships
- future career choices
- transition into adulthood

How can low levels of communication/ language development be eliminated?

- change prescribed curriculum - more emphasis on spoken language
- change prescribed curriculum - needs to be more flexible
- change prescribed curriculum - time to learn social skills
- shift in importance of being a parent - onus on parent
- shift in importance of being a parent - parents educated on issues in a better way

- shift in importance of being a parent - need to parent not be 'friend'
- health visitors/schools work together more closely
- increased support/input 0-5 from health visitors
- more community spaces (some school lack of pubs/community spaces) or need to book
- improved pre-natal offer to include parenting classes - peer led delivery
- stay and play/ parent/toddler groups - run in community spaces with funding support for books and toys that will develop those skills
- story sessions in libraries and community spaces - delivery where families live
- development of toy libraries
- development of games/more in community
- child poverty funds
- early years - working with parents e.g. family hubs - social support
- early years - working with parents e.g. family hubs - involvement in community
- midwife support - early intervention
- signposting to relevant agencies
- early intervention in the home
- app language rich environment
- ensure every opportunity taken to develop language e.g. I spy in the car
- collaborative structures
- building relationships and trust
- feeling safe, take a risk
- exposure to language/communication
- understand the reasons why the low levels exist
- understanding the barriers to low levels of communication
- good role models
- pre birth! Talk to bump
- baby signing classes/family hubs
- EY creating a language rich environment e.g. role model
- EY adult led open ended questions
- EY child led play
- primary/secondary - local curriculum, learning about their local town/community
- primary/secondary - time to talk!
- primary/secondary - community engagement/parents carers into schools to share
- primary/secondary - realistic expectations/aspirations
- primary/secondary - local volunteers e.g. extended family/listen to reading
- primary/secondary - raising realistic aspirations
- early identification
- better multiagency working
- more educational research on strategies to tackle this/greatest impact
- more sharing of best practice

- parenthood/new parent support. Educational outreach
- are aspects of this included in ITT
- parental engagement strategies
- is support offered as a lifelong process? Does it stop? Why?
- educational cross-phase working
- modelling
- explicit teaching
- intervention
- conversation/collaboration embedded in curriculum - progression
- high expectations
- multi agency working
- early identification of need
- In early years - sure start/church toddler groups
- In early years - free groups
- In early years - social isolation of mum
- In early years - play areas accessible to SEND
- In early years - inequalities -stay @ home / private nursery / funded places
- Primary - catering curriculum for needs of children (local)
- Primary - training volunteers to help with reading
- Primary - training for staff in different levels of communication
- Primary - training teaching assistants
- Primary - training male role models in primary
- Secondary - traffic light system to aid communication difficulties
- Secondary - local vocabulary curriculum
- teaching adults - adult vocabulary learning
- intergenerational activity?
- not able to be eliminated
- early intervention - concerning that nurseries can't offer places. Children will be Turing up at primary without language
- funding
- early years - education in antenatal period
- early years - availability of parent/child groups
- early years - signposting to resources
- early years - family hubs
- primary - smaller group activities
- primary - stronger relationships between home and school
- secondary - smaller class sizes/group sizes
- secondary - stop and read within timetable
- secondary - stronger relationships between home and school

How can relationships with parent/carers, teachers, business and industry be strengthened?

- collective understanding of clear roles - what each of us is doing
- more 'child-centred' pathways, so working towards a clear goal
- enough money for PSA and MH support/parent support
- government policy

- funding - more localised support outside school (so schools not doing everything)
- funding for schools who don't meet PP thresholds
- time
- mutual respect - there is a lack of respect for professionals
- support from media and government
- more facilitated opportunities
- not clear what each stakeholder responsible for e.g. GP providing letter around child with anxiety of what school needs to do - pressure on school businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to attend events
- businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to attend events
- businesses allowing flexible working - parents able to pick child from school
- VCSE be included on this list
- CSR work with CSR (SBC) more to build relationships with businesses and industry
- joined up events - collaboration
- looking at the skills gaps
- industries - local, national
- aspirations
- employment, training hub
- role models
- communication - move with the times
- how do parents/careers choose/prefer to comm
- does method of comm. Matter/reflect message? E.g. formal
- central office for comm? Provide consistent/prompt response?
- expect swift response
- acknowledge parental point of view and build into flexible education - support parents to support children
- reasonable adjustments and wider access to alternative genres/media (curriculum)
- more apprenticeships
- lack of opportunities post 16
- positive relationships with employers to feed children's passions
- inviting local businesses into schools
- vocational studies - cycling / animals / mechanics / hair & beauty - leads into industry and careers and increases local economy
- impartial person within schools to bridge gap between parents and education staff
- making schools available/more accessible to local communities / HAF activities, sports facilities open to community
- more funding/time allocation to do this
- flexible timings
- bringing all parties together regularly
- some informal opportunities for meeting (none threatening)
- working parties for each area of the industry
- local curriculum, local context, local need
- community groups

- incentivisation for involvement
- sharing of success/short term wins
- regular communication via a range of platforms
- community feel of school - parental engagement, parental voice
- outward facing culture
- culture of partnership
- a welcoming smile/hello/friendly face
- parent voice - two way conversation
- understanding individual family situation -don't be always punitive
- understanding individual family situation - treat parents as individuals/equal as well as children
- incentive for business/industry to get involved - can be local
- schools to ensure lines of communication are open and emails answered in a timely manner
- smaller class sizes - allowing teachers to develop better relationship with children and their parents
- volunteer readers - parents - older children
- multi agency working (signposting)
- positive updates aswell as negative updates
- work experience/career advice - primary and secondary
- exploring voice of the child (bigger emphasis)
- strengthen links between home and school so parents have a better understanding what the child will be learning

Appendix 4

Lived experiences for Pupils

- 1. How does school help you learn well?**
 - Different ways to help us learn, pictures/ visuals/ displays
 - Lots of recall
 - Trips – ideas for writing
 - Positive relationships with staff – there is no shame if we don't know something – not judgemental

- 2. Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning in school?**
 - Negative relationships with staff - Sometimes I don't feel respected
 - Talking in class – noise levels
 - Being late – sibling care
 - Internal truancy
 - Low levels of literacy
 - How does/ could school help you with this?
 - By helping us focus on what we need to learning
 - A positive relationship with the teacher – the best ones have a bit of banter - they are respectful – they listen – they manage my behaviour well – they know how to get the best out of me

- 3. Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning at home?**
 - Noise: Younger siblings falling out/ sharing a room/ wanting to play, trains going by, dogs barking, police sirens, house alarms, phone
 - Lack of sleep – use of technology, social media, particularly at weekends
 - No light – sometimes my brother turns the light off to play his game so I can't read my book
 - Chores – sometimes my mum calls me to do jobs
 - Caring responsibilities – parents – elderly relatives, pupils – with siblings
 - Lots of after school clubs
 - Gaming
 - What would help you with this?
 - A quieter place to work

- 4. What would help you stay in school more?**
 - Learning different things
 - How to handle money/ invest it
 - Key skills such as retail and business
 - More positive relationships with staff – they ask about our absence when we're off/
 - More responsibilities - being a prefect, lunchtime duties
 - Knowing more strategies to de-stress – e.g. a small room with a punch bag 'to let out my anger'
 - More fun: PE, trips, activities, lunchtime clubs, treats, activities to do during unstructured times
 - More celebration: certificates when we have done something well rewards – vouchers (Amazon/ Dominos/ Just Eat/

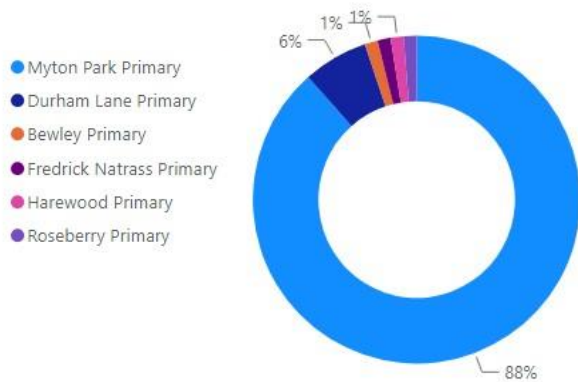
- 5. Are there any activities you would like to do in school or after school but don't happen at the moment?**
 - Boxing/ Kickboxing
 - Coding – I like computers
 - Fun things – climbing walls
 - Family events

- o Art and craft clubs
- o Cooking Clubs
- o Sports Clubs: Boxing, football, rugby, basketball, running
- o Holiday clubs
- o More engagement with Business and Industry
- o Academic clubs: Maths, (Story) Writing, English

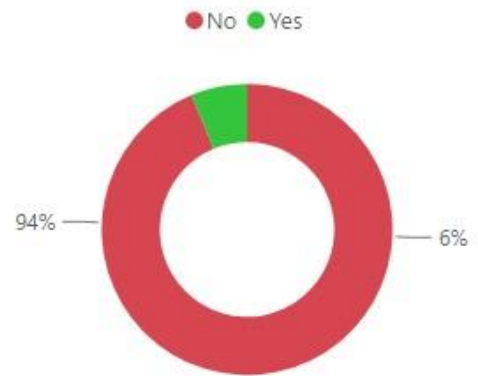
Education Survey

Primary School Responses

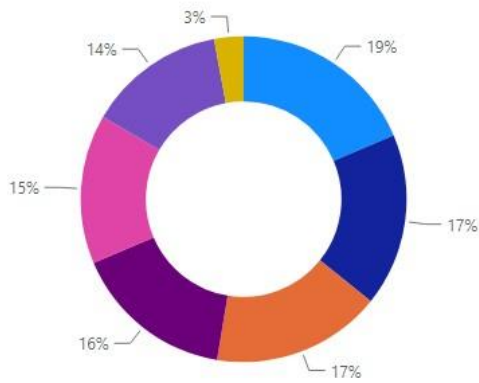
Response by School



Are you entitled to free school meals?



How does the school help you learn?



- They listen to me
- They take time to make sure I understand it
- If I don't understand they explain in other ways
- They make me feel safe
- They help me to read
- They practice my spelling
- They help me do my home work in school

Have any of these things got in the way of you learning at school?



Have any of these things got in the way of you learning at home?



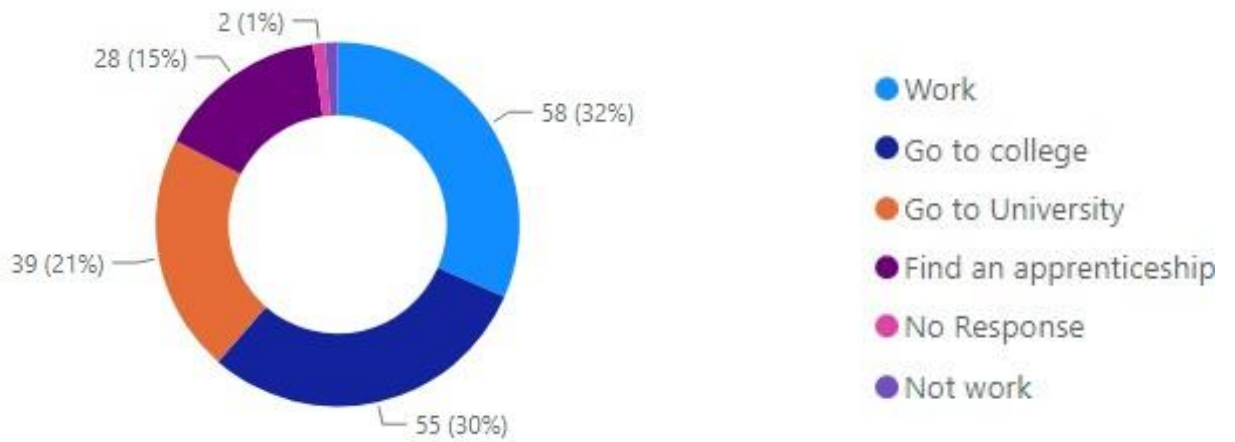
What activity would you like to do?



Why don't you do this?



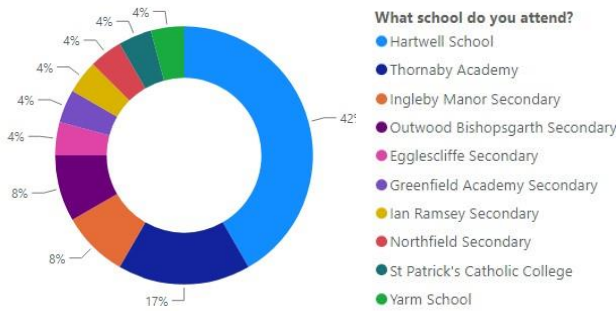
Thinking about when you are older, do you want to:



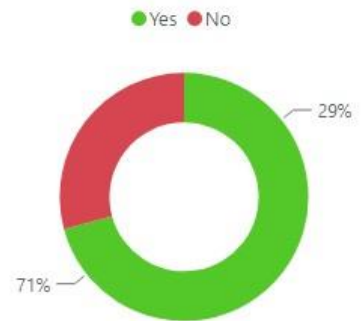
Education Survey

Secondary School Responses

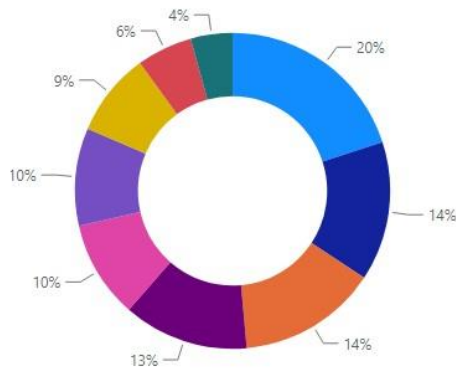
Response by school



Are you entitled to access Free School Meals

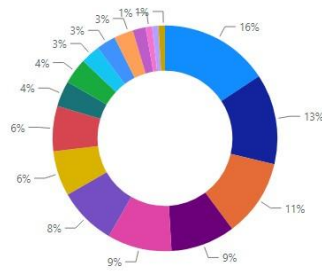


How does your school help you learn?



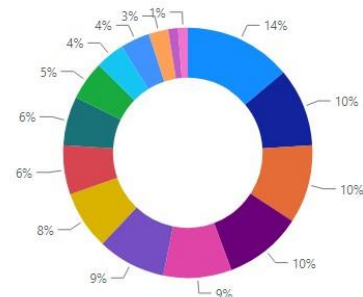
- They teach me new things
- They listen to me
- They take time to make sure I understand the work
- If I don't understand they explain in other ways
- They make me feel safe
- They motivate me to do / achieve more
- No Response
- I can stay later and use school equipment and / or space to c...
- They deal with the things I am worried about

Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning in school?



- The people in my class distract me
- Anxiety / mental health
- I am too tired to learn
- I don't like the subject or subject teacher
- Teachers don't listen / get or understand me
- I have a disability or additional learning need
- The change of teachers / classroom in each lesson
- Work is too hard
- Bullying / online bullying
- My health - physical
- I have to help look after others in my family
- Not having the correct uniform or things that I need for school

Is there anything that gets in the way of your learning at home?



- I am tired after school
- Anxiety / mental health
- I spend more time on social media (things like WhatsApp, TikTok, SnapChat, YouTube)
- I am tired before school
- I spend more time playing on games (things like PlayStations,...
- The work is too hard
- I have to help look after others in my family
- I spend more time going to activities like football, dance and ...
- The people I live with are too busy to help
- My home is too noisy

What could you do to help make this happen – in school



What could you do to help make this happen – at home?



What activity would you like to do?



Why don't you do this?



Do you plan to:



Appendix 5

Lived experiences for Parent Carers

1. How does your child learn best?

- Positive relationships with staff/ friends – praise, supported
- Calm environments – less pressure, less stress, time out quiet spaces
- Small groups
- Variety: practical activities/ play, via Apps and games, brain breaks

2. What gets in the way of their learning?

- Negative relationships with staff – teacher shouting rather than a calm voice, if it's not good he won't engage
- Negative environments– lesson is more about managing behaviours than teaching and learning, noise, distractions
- Lack of support – not enough positive feedback, teacher doesn't understand them or their individual needs
- Lack of resources – no escape, he feels overwhelmed
- Large classes
- Peer distractions
- Transitions

3. What does a 'good' school day look like for you?

- Happy - Arrive home calm and settled – continues into the evening
- No truancy
- Positive feedback and support, achievement points, good news messages, no negatives, no detentions
- Talks about learning, something has interested him
- Positive relationships with staff
- A good start to the day – get up on time, Enough sleep, no arguing over breakfast
- What does a 'bad' school day look like for you?
- Negative relationships with staff – perception teacher is getting at them, pupil has walked out of a lesson, pupil has verbally abused the teacher
- Negative feedback from school -Phone calls from school, detention, sent home
- Bad mental health – self harming, anxiety, panic attacks, lack of sleep, extremely distressed, crying, moody stressed
- Angry – verbally aggressive, withdrawn
- Refuses to attend school the next day
- Loss of hope – no point, school is worthless, won't achieve anything, won't learn anything
- A bad start to the day – getting up late

5. What is your ambition for your child?

- Happy
- High self esteem and self confidence – be better than he thinks he is
- Stay in school – go to college, Do exams - GSCSEs
- Achieves to the best of her ability
- In employment she enjoys
- Lives independently and successfully

6. How do you link with school?

- What works well?

- Regular communications: App messaging – SeeSaw/ Marvellous Me, calls and emails, teacher comments at the gate
- Events: Celebration assemblies
- Support from outside agencies
- What would be even better?
 - More support around behavioural issues, mental wellbeing,
 - Communication: between staff, pace of response, a Chat App
 - Positive feedback
 - Response to parent/ carer emails

Education Survey

Parent Carer Response

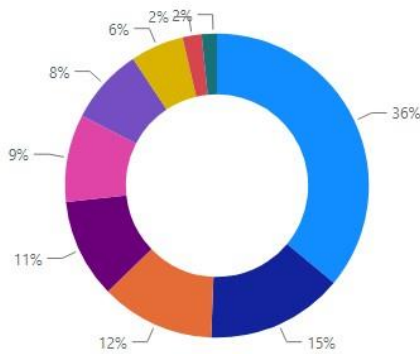
Response Rate by School



How does your child learn best?

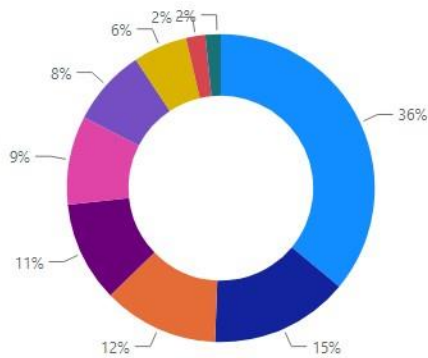


What gets in the way of their learning?



- My child gets easily distracted by others
- No Response
- My child does not like their teacher
- My child's behaviour at home is poor
- My child has friendship groups that have a negative impact o...
- My child's behaviour at school is reported to be poor
- I don't think my child's teacher likes them
- My child has friendship groups that have a negative impact o...
- I do not like my child's teacher

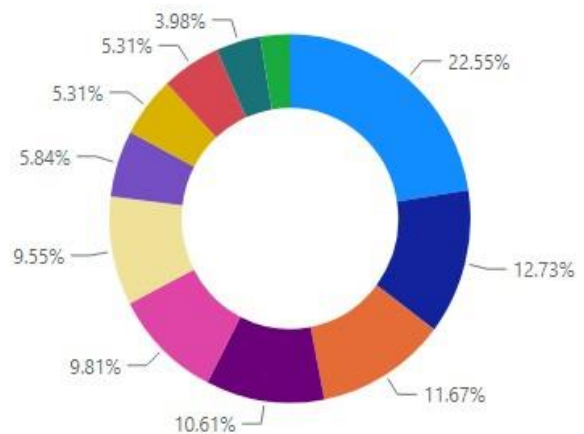
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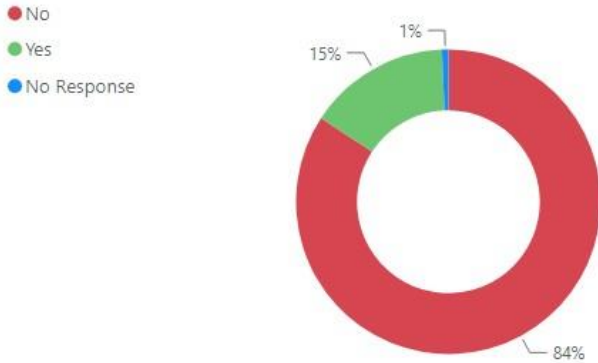
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Cost of Schooling

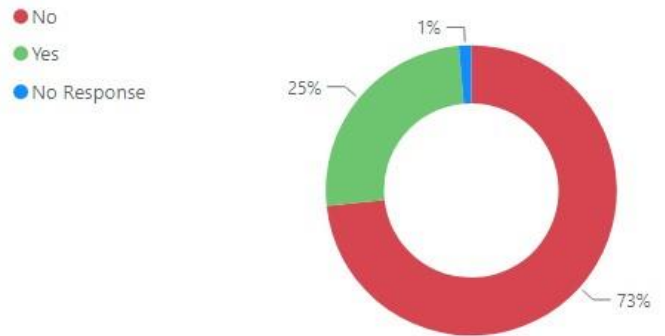
- Cost of uniform
- School meals / drinks
- Cost of school trips
- Cost of technology (including comp...
- Before and after school wrapround ...
- No Response
- Costs of voluntary donations to sch...
- Costs of materials for classes such a...
- Transport to and from school
- Cost of books and other home learn...
- Costs of general stationery and mat...



Has your child ever missed school because of one of these?



Have you ever asked for help from school with these?



Home Life:

22 % No response

20% I struggle to get my child to school/to school on time

18% There are lots of other challenges or difficult relationships at home that could get in the way of my child’s learning

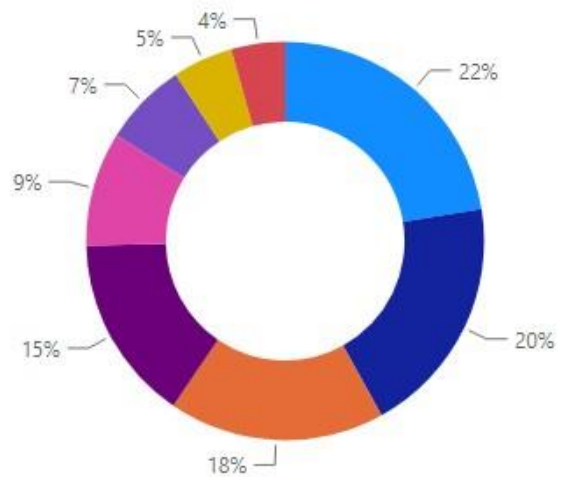
15% I struggle to find time to help with schoolwork at home

9% I struggle to get my child to complete homework because of social media or gaming at home

7% I do not know how to complete school work myself so find it hard to help my child

5% I struggle to afford items needed to help my child learn at home

4% My child does not have access to a computer or device at home



Level of Work At what time of day does your child learn best?

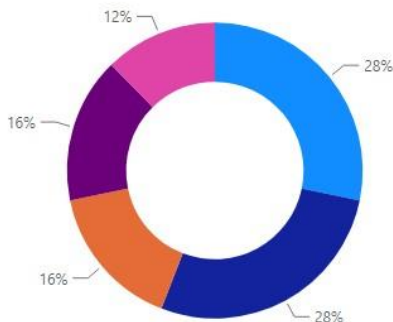
No Response

The work does not interest my child

The work my child is set is too difficult

There is too much work

The work my child is set is too easy



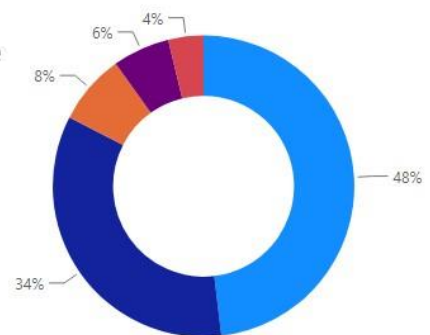
Mornings

Afternoons

After school

Weekends

No Response



Appendix 6



Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's, Children and Young People Select Committee is conducting an inquiry into how the Council, Stockton schools and colleges and other stakeholders can work together to narrow the gap in educational attainment. Based on two issues highlighted by schools, our inquiry is focusing specially on improving **attendance** and **communication skills** in children (vocabulary, oracy and literacy). The Committee's vision is to see best practice in all learning institutions and we are keen to hear all views and focus on problem solving. The Committee want to give everyone with a view the chance to contribute and will be talking to children and young people directly affected, their parents and wider family members as well as professionals. We will also be looking at best practice locally and further afield. Considerable work has been undertaken already which we intend to acknowledge and build upon. We aim to publish our findings in July and then roll out the lessons in collaboration with all schools and stakeholders.

How does your child learn best?

In a calm environment, with consistent teaching staff and following of his ehcp
 When they have a teacher that is enthusiastic about the subject
 Visually and with support 1 to 2 is currently gets at school
 in a calm setting when well regulated
 Visual
 Practically- "Hands on" learning.
 Hands on practical, doing work
 In a calm, nurturing and focused environment. It needs to be consistent and have routines.
 Staff have positive relationships and are neuro aware.
 Currently in play based sessions of small groups with things to utilise like toys or whiteboard with marker
 With practical activities in a quiet calm environment with close adult supervision
 Clear and concise information and understanding
 Variety of ways
 Pressure taken off and concentrating on Social and Emotional Mental Health.
 Practical activities
 One to one with someone who can help her
 Modeling, 1:1 support to explain any new concept.
 Visually and with a 'hands on' practical approach

She is a visual learner . In a smaller, quieter classroom
Classroom based learning or independently
In an environment which is tailored towards their needs and recognises each child is an individual.
One to one, practical, not writing lots, calm nurturing environment
In a specialist setting with small class sizes and a calm environment. They also learn best when following their own interests, doing practical activities and learning outside of the classroom.
Play
Hands on
Small groups. Plenty of rests. Positive language. Reward
Hands on movement
In small groups
With frequent movement breaks, in small classes - he's in a class of 9 so it's not overwhelmingly loud

What gets in the way of their learning?

noise, poor behaviour in class, not following his ehcp and meeting his needs
Supply Teachers!
Not understanding her emotions , over stimulating classroom , changes in school regulation and anxiety
His constriction
He is unable to currently attend school due to ESBA and unmet needs - currently on the pathway for Autism
Peers, Noise, having to do lessons they have no interest in.
Sensory need
Staff absence, cohorts/class groups not being of similar needs, staff awareness of neuro diversity and able to respond.
Large group's, too much information at one point. Too many open questions
A busy noisy environment, inadequate provision for his SEN in particular around his speech and language needs not being met
Anxiety, routine changes, unfamiliarity, environmental issues
Autism adhd
Pressure
Anxiety and having no trusted person in school
Her physical condition
Staff not trained in need and diagnoses
Noisy classrooms, being too hot, remaining still in the classroom, fatigue along with their diagnoses disabilities
Her needs not being met
Long periods of absence from school
Noise, disruptive behaviour, lack of mental health support, lack of adaptation to their needs, too many children in the class, work not suitable for their capability.

People not understanding their disability - FASD is the biggest. This includes approach, environment and content

A disruptive environment, sensory overload, unpredictability, plans or routines changing unexpectedly.

Learning disability

Other children disrupting the lesson

Not been listened to

Expected to sit still so long

their learning disability

Staff absences, large class sizes

What does a 'good' school day look like for you?

happy child, calm after school

When my child is happy to learn

Her attending school , and coming home telling me about her day

when my child achieves something new and comes home regulated and happy

My child going to a school with no anxiety

A good school day at the moment would be being able to put on their uniform and feeling able to attend school

6 hours a day, 5 days a week. Lessons in Cooking, IT, PE, Maths, English, Science, Life Skills, Financial Skills such as handling money, shopping, banking etc, BTEC hands on based studies with course work rather than exams. Support from teachers and TA's to achieve their best.

No melt down

A combination of learning, social skills and practical experiences. Consistent staffing and routines.

Dropping off without any issues and picking up without my child running past the line to come to me and not looking visibly upset

That my son engages in his learning, enjoys it and goes to school and comes out of school happy

Child going in for at least one lesson

Happy child

He stopped attending due to pressure

My daughter will go to school without me saying the attendance team will come and take you if you don't go and no meltdown on a morning

When she comes home happy and says she's had a good day, when she tells me she's learned something new

Sensory integration to enable my child is regulated so they can access education.

Being active and creative! My daughter loves to be outside in nature she finds this much more stimulating, she's relaxed and 'comes to life' outdoors . She's also very hands on and sensory so a good school day would include this type of activity.

Happy to go into school , comes home and tells me what she's learnt and what she's done and happy to continue with her day (based on new school)
Getting dressed, attending school and coming home smiling.
Enjoyed learning, suitable environment, no disruptions and despite having SEND child is supported adequately to meet their full potential.
Young person is happy to go into college and they come home calm and regulated
When my child comes out of school calm and happy.
Happy with no incidents
Quiet, no interruptions
Hasn't been punished for something she cannot help.
She comes out of school with no meltdowns
Happy, no meltdowns
Coming out regulated and calm and going in the same way too

What does a 'bad' school day look like for you?

When too many school politics get in the way of teaching children.
Phone calls telling me she has crisis during day
disruptive behaviour
Bad anxiety to the point of making himself sick and have the runs
Not sleeping the night before from school based anxiety, leading to Overload and meltdown at home, unable to leave the house to attend school
No or little support from staff, no safe person to go to within school, too noisy, overwhelming.
Full of meltdowns and self injurious behaviour
Disruption, changes to planned activities, staff absence (school plugging gaps with staff my child is not familiar with), staff not familiar with my child's EHCP and specific needs.
Gates not open at correct time so issues with regulation and going into class. Usually tears. When leaving running straight towards me with tears in their eyes wanting a cuddle
When there is too much going on, out of routine so he doesn't understand and follow what is happening. I then get told he's been disruptive at school
Child refusing to go in due to anxiety, unexpected changes. Resulting in isolation and aggression
Refusing to attend
Exploding when he comes home.
Anxiety night before school a soon as she wakes up anxiety/ meltdown effects full house manage to get her there then constant texts from her. Then she comes home to volcano effect
Come home with nothing been done such as saying don't know what I did or not having her bin changed when it's been wet all day
Staff who havnt got him, and also staff to understand some days he will have off days and needs more time on these days.
Being stuck in the classroom in the same position all day and being talked at
Wakes up crying, cry's on school run, school refusal and panic attacks about being at school (based on old school)
Refusal to get dressed or attend, no support or no learning taking place

Not able to eat due to lack of dining facilities, lack of support due to funding.
Full on refusal, emotional dysregulation sometimes self harm
When my child comes out of school unhappy and moody. When they can't speak to me
and when they explode once home.
My child injuring someone
Change, disruptive lessons, teachers shouting at the class as a whole
Meltdown, poor mental health, exhausted
She will come out overwhelmed and upset
Being sent home
We don't get a bad day

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What is your ambition for your child?

to survive education without a difinitive impact on his mental health
To be happy and fulfilled in what they are doing.
To be happy and and to gain her full potential whatever that maybe
short term more academic skills
To be happy and get the same out of life everyone else gets
Being happy and being able to reach their full potential.
To have a better understand of the while around them.
To thrive
To have the same opportunities as an other pupil. To be independent and have
employment.
To be able to communicate with us and answer simple questions or ask us things
For him to be independent and get a paying job of his choosing and that he is happy with
a nice social life and wide circle of friends both with SEN and without
To develop friendships and social inclusion
To be happy and content
To be happy and build on confidence.
To be happy and healthy and try to work how to deal with anxiety and adhd
To be the best she can be and to be pushed to help her learn

To achieve his best possible outcome and lead as independent adult life as his condition allows

For her to be happy and to reach a level of independence that she is capable of (difficult to tell at this stage what this will look like) and for her to feel she belongs somewhere with some friends.

To be happy and settled

To attend school every day and continue to enjoy learning

To have an education which meets their needs, to be happy, to be able to meet their full potential

To live the life they want to live

For my child to be happy and healthy, become independent in everyday living and find something to do in the future that they will find interesting and will do happily.

Happy and healthy

Get qualifications needed for an apprenticeship

To be supported within school

For her to be happy

To survive without me

To have a small part time job if this is possible, to gain independence to

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How do you link with school? Does it work? and not how could it improve?

communication is poor, they dont follow statutory guidance and never return calls or emails

Email - works because the learning manager is interested in my child.

We have class dojo which we message each other on and phonecalls to school phone calls and messges

Email and phone and yes it works well

Child currently not in school, only link with school currently is when they come to check in on him at home. No current learning in place as school said they don't send work home as don't want to encourage children to be at home.

Phone calls. School tend to phone if there are problems or issues. Good feedback comes in chunks, a few weeks you get updates then they stop for months. Secondary specialist school my son attends doesn't use a parent/school app like primary schools do to keep parent carers informed.

I have a great working relationship with all 3 schools my children attend

Via email and conversation. Emails not always responded too without prompting.

Sometimes feel concerns are brushed away. Would improve with school recognising parents views more.

Communication book let's me know what they've done in school. Sometimes I get a handover at home time depending on who is helping with the handover other times the TA just lets them run to me. An actual small handover works well to explain what did or didn't go well. Explanation of what they would like us to do outside of school to help with learning would be great so we're all on the same page with consistency as that's key for my child's development and understanding

I get a brief verbal handover when collecting him some days. I can email the SENCO and they email me. It would be helpful to have more feedback around what happens during the day, such as what activities he did, what he ate, whether there was anything that happened that I should be aware of, including things he did well.

We have daily school contact. Very happy with school

Email , phone calls - yes it works

No it doesn't work this year communication has been poor.

It is always me that's links with school, i email I don't get anything from them. Everything they promise to do they don't then Back track in meetings it's not wonder my daughter has no trusted relationship with anyone there! It could be improved if the school actually cared about my daughter it's all about attendance not about my daughter. They should be at least weekly contact with myself and they promised to do this with Katie but that's yet to happen! She hasn't had any English input for a year and no one is bothered, I can't get my head around 'every child has the right to an education' yet schools can do what they like.

We use evidence for learning or phone calls it doesn't work really as you can message them but I feel written communication works best as you can tell them how she has been and what the day looks like for them based on how she had been

School app which doesn't always work. Communication could be improved, emails would also work better, and phone calls.

Very well. She attends Abbey Hill and we've no complaints. In an ideal world the classrooms would be more open and airy and bigger to accommodate children (often with large equipment) and staff with some access to the outdoors. This is not the nature of the building though which is no fault of the staff - they make the best of what they have there we feel.

New school - class dojo, see teachers on the playground every morning and happy to stop and talk. Communication via there Facebook group. Very easy to communicate with. Old school - Very little communication, rarely see staff to be able to talk, no responsive to emails and shut you down when you finally get a chance to talk.

Email, calls. No often ignored or have to leave voicemails or emails that are not returned. School currently uses an app, but also sends general letters by post. Email would be better. Weekly newsletters. Some staff do reply to issues some do not, more continuity with communication.

Through face to face , telephone, email - it works. College are totally on board which is refreshing given secondary school provision

Via email, phonecalls and meetings. It works but I often feel like they don't listen..

Chatting on drop off and collection providing updates to each other

Email. They are very much that the school is never wrong. Listen to the parents who are dealing with the issue

School is extremely poor at listening and communicating. Make plans and not implemented. Not all staff on same page.

I try school don't want to help children who don't fit in a box

Note book and online pics, works okay

I take him & collect him so I see the TA or teachers daily and we receive daily updates in his book

From a parent carer perspective, how could attendance be improved?

By following and meeting need and allowing reasonable adjustments and getting in early rather than leaving it to get worse. Schools need to be proactive.

Stop putting barriers in the way of a child attending. Make adjustments to allow them to attend.

my child's attendance is fine

Help with anxiety and counselling services

Child is currently receiving High Intensity CBT and is unable to attend school after needs were not met in school. Unsure, at this current time how to move forward- if an EHCP may be needed and unsure if current school is the right provision for him

My son is on a reduced timetable as he can't cope and the school can't meet his needs during the lessons he has dropped. I want him back full time but we've been doing this since October 2023 with no plan in place to get him back in.

More flexible day

Acknowledging when pupils doing well and raising profile in school. Home/ school communication improvements and tailored support.

Currently no issues with attendance but being allowed to try late starts etc would probably help

My son's attendance would be improved if school didn't send him home every time he had loose stools when he does not have a sickness bug. Also he has a lot of appointments in different hospital departments so he can't always help his attendance and nor can we.

He also has a poor immune system so the push for attendance from other children will always cause problems for us as a class full of sick kids makes my son much more vulnerable and likely to be off as he gets too poorly to attend

Time, acknowledgement of issues, low demands. Up to date information

More focus on helping anxiety and correct school placement

Think about the child not just the academic.

School to actually work with my daughter not just in school come and do a home visit build a relationship with her so she feels comfortable and safe in school. Who makes sure what school say they are going to put in place in an attendance meeting happens, if I as a parent didn't follow through in things I said I would do then there would be problems! My daughter's school need to understand anxiety and adhd and help make her feel comfortable, if her one friend was off she wouldn't go in as she feel like she has no one else!

If a child is ill then it should be marked as absent but if a child who has a physical disability needs to go to a hospital appointment it shouldn't be classed as a missed attendance at school

My child has multiply appointments for his needs and extra therapy another child without needs would need to attend. He needs the therapy for his development. Attendance should be scored on the times he can attend school and not penalised with a lower score because he needs medical appointments

I don't worry about my child's attendance. I'm lucky that she's not often ill and she happily attends school. If it were an issue for us I imagine a supportive approach from school and the LA would be essential in helping this improve.

Get to the route of why the child does not want to attend school. Every school is different. My daughter was attending Pentland school, screamed and cried every single day, had panic attacks about going into school, wouldn't cope once in school and full school

refusal we moved her to billingham south and she from day 1 has gone in happy and been happy on the way to school, during school day and after school. The school and the staff are the reasons why a child will or will not attend !

With better understanding of the cause, an education psychologist assessment and occupational therapist assessment. To gain knowledge on the best way school and parents can support and needs or struggles.

There is a disparity between support offered for parents in academies in comparison to LA schools. Parents should be allocated an independent key worker. Training should be provided to schools rather than putting all the onus on parents. More EMS / specialist provisions. For EBSA there is no support, for example if a pupil demonstrates challenging behaviour due to safeguarding they will be offered a place in PRU when interventions do not work. For a child who demonstrates their SEMH by withdrawing and not wanting to attend, this becomes the issue of the parents, yet both children possibly have SEMH and the families/ children are not treated equally. Monthly parental meetings with the SBC SEND team allowing them to understand the challenges endured. The lack of access and waiting times to professional assessments including educational psychologists means that families who can afford to pay privately are more likely to get support. Consider schools that have a more holistic approach including opportunities to learn practical skills or work with animals.

The needs of the children being acknowledged and supported. Stop punishing children for non attendance and stop blaming parents - majority don't allow non attendance because they can't be bothered. It's hard, really hard

If school listened to me, if they made changes that are needed and didn't just say what they thought you wanted to hear then not act on what they had promised.

Changes being made

Listen to the parents when issues are first flagged and take them seriously!

A plan in place and stuck to across whole of school.

Listen and work with parents

Dealing with challenging behaviour well

He's currently 100%

From a parent carer perspective, how could communication skills in children (vocabulary, oracy and literacy) be improved?

Access to speech and language therapists, involving parents with interventions and understanding why its important for the child- not just the school results.

See them as valued individuals

By meeting the child at there level

more concentration on academic skills i sometimes feel my child is going over stuff he already knows

More visuals and more people being educated in additional needs

Practical learning. Putting them into practice in everyday use.

More salt support within schools

Engaging families, skilling parents/carers to support/ read/ discuss either children out of school. Better links with local libraries to encourage an interest in reading.

Explanation of what to try at home and the methods used at school would be great so we can try to emulate it at home, where possible but understanding that sometimes what is done at school is enough for them for now

By having regular appointments and support from qualified speech and language therapists with the correct skills to be able to support the school staff to also work on those skills the rest of the week. This includes the skills and training to understand the barriers and learning styles in different conditions such as Down's Syndrome. To improve literacy it needs to be recognised that not all children will learn through phonics, my son does quite well with whole word reading and should be fully supported to learn this way as well

By providing time, encouragement and reassurance.

Salt involvement

Have some way to communicate through technology, this day and age this is how children communicate they all don't feel comfortable face to face. If my daughter is anxious she texts me they should be able to do similar in the school day. If they put children in classes where there are children who have all different needs rather than all in a class with the same needs

Better speech and language input, actual session with a therapist, a parent shouldn't have to do their own research and courses to explain what the communication needs of their child is. With a higher amount of children needing speech and language this is an area that should be invested in, as will help children's development and make them more likely to be able to access education and give better long term results.

Communication is a huge challenge for my daughter. She has a range of communication difficulties including delayed speech, stammer, selective mutism... we've been lucky in that her present school have an 'in house' speech and language therapist who has worked closely with us all. We've also had help from the Ed psych and the therapy dog. The therapy dog has helped immensely, I only wish this approach had been more readily accepted earlier on in her education. In terms of literacy skills I feel access to a range of 'schemes' (eg visual) would be more beneficial to the way my child learns - for example the current trend in education seems to favour a phonics approach to learning literacy skills - this doesn't particularly suit my daughter and I feel there's a gap in the market for something more suited to children like her who learn in a much more visual way.

Meeting the child's individual needs and have learning tailored for each one.

Having a trusted staff member they feel safe to communicate too and have the chance to check in with.

Increase funding for speech and language therapists, considering offering apprenticeship roles to attract more people into professional roles. Schools to work more with local libraries. Have opportunities for assessments so that children with dyslexia and other SEND are supported adequately.

If children were listened to and spoken to in a kind way. Often teachers seem to bully children and the rules and regulations such as having the wrong coloured socks on seem to take priority!

More understanding and teaching for staff

Role play, make learning fun again. Lots of learning around play and real life.

For ALL staff to be more aware of pupils' needs and an actual response back and forth with one person within school. Rather than passed pillar to post.

Actually listen look for signs such as masking etc training would be beneficial
My children are non verbal - no improvement seen
More SALT visits!

Appendix 7



When did you start to have concerns around your child/young person finding attending school difficult?

School nursery, age 3
May 2021
March 2023
Since September 23
3 years ago
When he started senior school, mainstream
When he started nursery.
Starting Secondary school
Reception
2023
In year 7
Year 4
2022
He has always struggled but still managed to attend until September 2023 when he moved up to seniors. It was too much of a big change for him and he has struggled ever since to attend
Year6
When he was in year 5
2 months into year 7, October 2022
From starting school all together
its been going on for over a year.
My child experienced EBSA 09/20-09/22. Prior to covid she had needed regular reset days due to poor mental health.
Age of 3

	2020
In primary school, around year 4	
Entering year 9	
Year 5	
Last October	
Reception	
Age 7	
At age 3	
Transitioning into secondary school.	
December 2022	
Primary school after COVID	
Year 5	
Nursery	
Primary school KS2 when independence is thrust on them age 7-8 the same time in a child's development they realise they are mortal and fears become real	
	14
Year 5	
Year 5 going into year 6 starting to refuse to attend, but had been displaying frustrated and angry behaviours (shouting, arguing and kicking car seats etc) on way home from school since y3, but displayed	
When he was four years old and started reception. He was four in June and started reception the following September.	
Around the age 6	

At the beginning of your EBSA journey – how did you get advice or support (for you and your child)?

I only recently found out about EBSA after seeking advice from SENDiass. The school then done an assessment of choosing pictures to look at if my daughter is experiencing EBSA.
Spoke with her school
Google as SEN department weren't helpful
None
The internet
I self refered into CAMHS, we started with the getting help team, who were no help and are now with the getting more help team
From school who refered to camhs
Little support, sent to gp theb camhs then turned away back to square one. 4 years later not much further forward. We have had emotional blackmail directed at anxious child weve had lies and empty promises. Very little support by any service. Discharged from arly help with no help. Discharged from alliance cause wasnt attending school for sessions. Currently paying private for therapy and assessments because we have been failed for the last 4 years.
We didn't just hounded to bring in our child and show 'tough love'

Just to persevere and get her into school
I had to request meetings with the school, the gp, I contacted Daisy chain. I retry much had to rely on my own knowledge to get support put in place.
I accessed school support and he had a few sessions with talking therapy.
We didn't, we believe that the way school handled it caused significant trauma and that experience will never leave him.he doesn't fully trust schools now due to this.
From the SPCF and SENDIASS
SENDIAS and the CPN
I didn't I had to look myself for help
I tried to speak to his teachers and asked them for assessment from a ed psych
Through the school
Wasn't much only Sendiass
From friends.
EBSA was only recognised after a EP report 26th feb 2024
All of the support came from reading, virtual parent groups and from other SEND parents.
I didnt
Myself still the same now!
There wasn't any support from school until 2024
Social Services - only when she completely stopped attending in year 9
CAHMS and the school. Post adoption support team.
School, cahms
I didn't feel we did really.When it came apparent our son was getting bullied in school we informed school.
School weren't helpful though & Camhs
Own experience as a Sen TA - nothing other
Camhs
It was difficult as school weren't supportive in the beginning. I had to get early help involved who worked with us but when they were unable to get my child into school they referred to neuro diversity triage and closed the case saying they couldn't help.
Through post adoption support
I spoke to primary to explain the issues I was having, but never got any help with getting her in. Her to do that all myself.
Got no help
I got ignored by school and it wasn't until someone seen me struggling with my daughter they offered help and advice
Both my children were EBSA at first they loved school but the pressure of KS2 was too much also they were denied support because they had no academic need, there ASD was dismissed because they were meeting expectations academically. They would come home and explode after masking all day. They couldn't be their true authentic self. Both my children used the language that they didn't feel safe! At no time was any support offered at the beginning until attendance was poor.

No advice
Parent advisor at primary
Referred back to previous parenting support and theraputic councillor working with at time around trauma
The school we initially chose for my son to attended were absolutely awful. No help or understanding, their SENCO called my son 'a problem' when in fact he is the most loving, sensitive little boy.
With difficulty, school were not prepared to referee him but we managed to get a local doctor to refer him

What did this support, if any- look /feel like?

I haven't had any feedback from the assessment, so i haven't received any support regarding this yet. When my daughter was in primary school she received counselling from Alliance due to the school referring her for anxiety which i now believe was also EBSA(had i know about it then.)
Joint funding counselling sessions from the Bungalow Project
Poor. SEN department wanted him to come in every day even with panic attacks and to try up to 4 times a day to attend
None
Support group, peer mentoring and information
My son now has a mental health nurse from CAMHS and is also medicated via the psychologist for his anxiety
School were supportive with putting plans in place and offering to come out to speak to my son. Camhs went through the autism assesment.
Threats of fines and prosecution. 9 year old child at the time told to "man up" by an EWO.
There wasn't any it was just parental blame
I don't feel I had any support
Alliance were amazing although there was a long wait. However after speaking to them they arranged to come to the house and made such a difference. School took time to support but once they understood the situation they have become better over time in accepting that he can't come to school not won't come to school.
He was introduced to the library team which has been wonderful. However outside this it can feel like people are not listening or communicating with each other. It was harder after his class tutor changed, as he was closer with his previous one. Sometimes I email about this EBSA and how pink slips impact this, and often no one responds, which makes me feel like they dont believe us. They were quick to support him recently with bullying though.
No one took the time to listen and they thought they knew best about my child.. Had they listened to me in the first place it would never have gotten that far.
Lots of reassurance for myself, advice on what to do next and how to support my son.
That very little can be done to support and we are basically left on our own due to son not being able to engage.
Not helpful
I wasn't listened to. School had their own agenda. They tried to put things in place without assessment first - this made things worse for my son.
Adjustments to her timetable, positive steps. More support within the classroom when she did attend.

Telling me over phone what can happen if I don't send him
None
Non to date, the school packed us off with an anxiety leaflet.
It was self directed and self discovered. Reading anything I could find in the subject and joining virtual support groups. There was an absence of professional support. I spent hours reaching out to services SBC, CAMHS, school, Daisy Chain, etc but it was a constant game of making phone calls and people suggesting services that were little or no help. In honesty the professional 'support' was judgemental, failed to respect the views/knowledge of parents, lacked understanding of neurodivergence.
I contacted cahms I send endless emails to school.
In 2024 I was told he could attend at lunch time. This helped until the headteacher decided he had to start going in at 10am.
Referral to CAMHS, OT, then discharged and... nothingness
The school are supportive but always mark it down as unauthorised. CAMHS couldn't really help. They put her on a Decider group.
Not alot
School looked into the bullying, and our sons head of year kept us up to date with what was happening/bullying getting dealt with.
Not helpful from school! Camhs diagnosed seperation anxiety
None existent
Early help. They were really good until they closed the case with the issue unresolved.
They give me strategies to try to get my son into school when he started to completely refuse to go in after the Easter holidays 2023
None existent
N/a
I felt and still feel very let down
Non
Occ health support and understanding from school. extra support.
Verbal advice, but situation changed daily, so had to prepare ourselves to deal with what that days events/triggers would be, I.e would go to school, reluctant, refusing, physically aggressive or upset
There was zero support. I was being called within an hour of leaving him to come and 'sort him out' and when I arrived would often find him on his own (at four years old) unsupervised and looking really sad - no wonder he didn't want to be there.
Very dismissive as if our son didn't matter. Even the doctor's referral letter stated the "the child Sat quietly for over half an hour, mother insisted there were issues" he was on his tablet playing games

Who were the key people/services that you worked with/ are working with whilst managing ESBA?

SENDias, School and on a whole of my daughter's difficulties are now working with early help, Alliance and local authority.
Work with Pastoral support in school and Alliance but this was more focused on her anxiety. The ESBA slowly got worse over time but I felt was never a concern of the school as I managed to get her in for the majority of the times
School, social prescribing, CAMHS, Early Help (School Support)
None
Educational psychologist and private psychotherapist
His nurse from CAMHS has been amazing
School.
Camhs - turned away. Early help-discharged twice. Alliance- discharged twice.
Nobody offered any support apart from Daisychain who are very understanding. They are also aware how many children are struggling
Tried to work with school but no other professionals got involved. I had some support from Id cahms who was involved with her sister.
Alliance, daisy chain, footsteps, GP, school, early help school support
No one person, as they usually just send me parenting class adverts.
No one, we did have some support from the inclusion team but never communicated what they did or why
SPCF, SENDIASS, School key worker, CAMHS
CPN, CAMHS, SENDIAS and school
Family support worker
Autism North East. Tree tops OT. Head of Alternative Provision. Sendiass and Senco
Egglescliffe school, CAMHS the LA to get and EHCP approved
Key worker not helpful, school not helpful
School Support
identified by EP then No help off anyone, iv just demanded a referral to the vulnerable learners team
The 0-19 were supportive and good at chasing up medical support. Our GP was helpful in making referrals and provided a letter for school. Other support in the form of SALT & EP to ensure she got her needs identified and the right support was paid for through independent professionals. CAMHS were awful. The level of parent blame and lack of understanding was horrendous. The best service by far was Daisy Chain and accessing an educational placement as AP and then AP at King Edwin prior to a place becoming available.
Adhd team and autism team and sen at school
CAHMS, early help support SENDIAS attended last meeting
School support, Daisy Chain, Early Help, Alliance.
CAMHS, OT, school, social workers
We haven't had any.
School head teacher
Head of year/School Senco (son is waiting for autism assessment).

Camhs
Camhs/ School senco
Camhs
Early help and CAHMS
Specialist teacher, Senco in school and post adoption support
It was school. Camhs wouldn't offer any assistance after she was referred to Maat
None
Now we're working with my daughters teacher
EHA worker, CAHMS, school
School attendance
Currently in secondary Y7, feel totally lost/no help
Therapeutic trauma councillor and school
I tried to work with the school. In the end I removed him from roll and homeschooled him.
CH:AMS

Did you find them helpful for your situation? please explain why

Yes and no. They haven't provided much support, i as a parent have had to push for most of these services myself. The school have now tried new approaches such as a part time timetable which has made improvements to her wellbeing and attendance.
They were helpful in relation to trying to help her school anxiety but not so much for the EBSA. I think it took a while for them to believe the problems we were having at home due to how she presented at school.
Social prescribing were helpful simply just by offering support to both myself and my son. School support weren't great. CAMHS couldn't help and school were useless
Yes they understood my child and there issues
She listens and gives advice
Yes. Tby were understanding and offered lots of advice
Absolutely not.
Daisychain have literally saved our child's mental health
School haven't offered much support in dealing with these issues
Alliance, Daisy chain and Footsteps have been outstanding in their support - they understood the situation immediately and tried to help in any way they could often going out of their way to help.
The courses were not autism specific, just for behaviour issues in general. I am an autism practitioner working with children, so I have access to that info. I would prefer they offered him more adjustments. He is not struggling when at home.
Unsure

I found SPCF very helpful with emotional support, advice and understanding. SENDASS gave advice on what I needed to do regarding an interim EHCP review. CAMHS were useless. School took a long while to understand what the issue was.
Helpful in saying they understand and can put referrals in however this referrals can take years to have appointments and if son can't engage then we are still in the same position with nowhere to turn.
No
School were very unhelpful until Autism North East gave a diagnosis. They then started to listen but not quickly enough. Eventually in year 10 after 6 months out of education we were supported into Alternative Provision.
Yes I have found our journey a supported one. Initially it was a long process to try and make the steps to get evidence to put to panel for and EHCP, however since October 2023 my daughter has been assessed, granted an EHCP in a specialist environment, given a placement at our parental preference school and supported through meaningful counselling at CAHMS
No
Extremely!
no, still waiting as panel is monthly,
0-19 good for chasing up medical referrals. Daisy Chain provided well-being support followed by AP in form of Ed placement to support my daughter to understand her diagnosis and to have a safe place. New school staff have been amazing at working with us and her rather than seeing us and her as the problem.
Yes gave me advice and helped me with information
Cahms long process still going on and early help say they can only give suggestions not enforce school. Sendias always helpful!
I did, but school weren't helping with the situation. They weren't consistent, and just kept telling my son that it would be me getting into trouble for him not going into school, even if we were in the office.
It is difficult to get help for a problem that started with trauma left unaddressed in primary school, which went untouched until it became out of control in secondary. When we ask for help, it needs to be immediate, whether the concern is bullying, gender identity, or neurodivergence, all of which apply in this situation
We haven't really had any support.
Yes however being told she is OK now as I am getting her to school frustrates me as I get beaten and verbally abused trying to get her there. She also attacks her younger sister on the way or takes her seat belt off so I have to stop.
In some ways.our son wanted a reduced timetable,but we were told this was very rare and under certain circumstances,which were never explained.
A little
Not really, couldn't see past behaviour
Not at all
CAHMS was for anxiety, my child had low intensity cognitive behaviour therapy, there wasn't a huge amount about school but taught my child strategies to cope outside school but could be transferable in school
Specialist teacher is nice and built good relationship with my son, gives him strategies to use when coming in but we are no further forward with increasing his time in school and his work with us is coming to an end. Senco help has been variable, most of the time I would say understanding and has tried lots of different things to help but sometimes I have felt parent blamed and judged. Post adoption support have been brilliant, giving lots of advice, contacts to reach out to, help with EHCP application. They really understand the EBSA

No. Because I managed to get her in they didn't seem to care how it took to get there.
N/a
Now and again. It can be very hit and miss
Yes - the EHA worker made everyone accountable for their actions reviewed every 6 weeks. CAHMs I think the support staff in a school should be taught the same strategies as the child so they can help them use them.
NO just came over to pick him up 2x after that nothing
The theraputic councillor was working with us as a family and child in school, not as a child or parent individually. This allowed her to see the whole picture and liase with school too. It meant that advice was tailored to our needs and school understood how we parented and our son' s needs clearer. Felt they were more willing to listen to a professional as they were quick to dismiss our input.
No.
Not---' at all, we were missed out on appts, they had no it took 5 years and the most helpful information was given in the last session

When you received support – what was the purpose of the support? Did it work?

To reduce overwhelming my daughter. The part time timetable has improved her overall attendance.
It was to help her manage her anxiety, fears in and about school. I worked to a certain point but every day she went into school scared but not as scared as before 😊
Social prescribing was to get him back socialising - no but he feels like he has another trusted adult in his life
School support to get him to go back to school - no he already had all his plans in place. They have just discharged him as there's nothing more they can offer him
School were to try and get him attending - no they couldn't provide any consistency despite promising it
CAMHS to try and deal with the mental health side of it - they couldn't help as it's an 'autistic trait' which doesn't respond to CBT
We got no support from the School whatsoever, and even when the red reports there were unable or not willing to put support in place
We had been through all the talking therapies and I knew he needed medication, he's finally on anti anxiety tablets
To ensure my son felt comfortable with the teachers and was clear who he could talk to when needed. He still struggles with attendance, however continues to be supported by school
Parent Led CBT- no
No support other than school meetings and to use 'tough love' or stop my son from doing anything like dog walks, when he should be in school. No care for his mental health just school attendance.
N/A
Alliance - CBT and exposure therapy - worked for anxiety and leaving the house but attending school still not possible.
Daisy Chain - worked on understanding self attending school still not possible.
Footsteps - received medication which has helped anxiety but again attending school still not possible.

<p>Early help - helped with daily challenges but attending school still not possible. School - put in high level of reasonable adjustments but still not possible to attend school</p>
<p>Introduced him to the library which helped for a while</p>
<p>Unsure.. No one explained it</p>
<p>It did work. School eventually understood, I knew what paths to follow and eventually CAMHS provided evidence for the LA to again eventually put something in place for my son.</p>
<p>Talking therapy, PT-timetable, 5 minute pass to leave early, access to SEN areas. None have helped very much. There is a lot of pressure for instance the PT timetable was put in place for 4 weeks to be reviewed at Easter. Today they informed me that even though he is still struggling and hardly attending they are increasing the time he needs to be in. This has put my son in panic mode and it feels like the few small steps he has taken have been for nothing as this will pull him back to the beginning. Also I have been requesting work for him to do so he dies but fall too far behind but they won't. So on top of the EBSA he is now really behind which adds even more to it.</p>
<p>To find out what was 'wrong' with daughter</p>
<p>The short term placement was to get him back into school. It was evident he would not manage in mainstream so it was made long term and my son has been in school everyday for about a year now.</p>
<p>We were supported through the EHCP application process by Graces mainstream school, we are also being supported through CAMHS by way of building Graces resilience and coping mechanisms through exploring polyvagal theory and the use of the book little Meerkats Big Panic. Its a new approach and I cannot recommend it and Jon Birch, who is delivering it, highly enough</p>
<p>recieved 1 day support which was promised for 6 weeks</p>
<p>Working with daughter in and outside of school</p>
<p>n/a</p>
<p>The support worked in that she was able to engage. But by the time we found and accessed support she was already traumatised and had developed tics and suicidal ideation. No amount of support was ever going to be successful at getting her back into the original placement, there had been too much damage done to her mental health.</p>
<p>To help my child in school with his learning and yes it's helping</p>
<p>CAHMS is suppose to be advanced cbt but can't see this happening the lady can never remember what has been said last time we seen her and when I asked what the plan was she said she would just talk to Katie??!! Early help school support, spoke to my daughter over a period of time and now saying will be stop working with her. It seems if school say they will do things then it just taken that that's what will happen, I have explained how I feel them been involved will put some pressure on school so could she stay open with them.</p>
<p>When he was finally 'allowed' to go in at lunch, this helped massively. My son was more complicit, he was calm, started doing homework and helping around the house. He had time to regulate before starting his school day.</p>
<p>They offered support around anxiety. It barely scratched the surface therefore it has not worked if the objective was getting the child back to school</p>
<p>We haven't had any support as such.</p>
<p>Not alot tbh.</p>
<p>Basically told that our son's attendance was getting worse,and that once it got to 80%we would start getting attendance letters...this actually happened at 82% attendance.</p>
<p>Seperation anxiety helped a little till lockdown happened</p>
<p>Short term cbt - no use, option to work in base at school - didn't work</p>
<p>For an assessment. No</p>

Currently I am under caution from the Local Authority for attendance but my caseworker is really good and seems supportive, my child is on a phased return and is attending regularly for 2 hours a day.
As above for specialist teacher. I've also been involved with CAMHS, early help, daisy chain. They listened and empathised with our situation. Offered advice but it was nothing we weren't already doing then would sign us off with no further help
To make going into school easier. Some day it did some days it didn't
EHA Worker facilitated meetings with school, IASS let me know options, CAHMS helped with children's anxiety. School facilitated a small nurture group of children struggling after covid of 5 my daughter then managed primary years.
Overall yes, but the crux of it was based on us engaging, communicating and remaining consistent with our approach.
The biggest and best support we received was when we were offered a place at a different school. They have been amazing, truly appreciating my son for who he is.
He was referred OT which he still has now

Through your ESBA journey – what made the most difference to you / your family?

The information about what ESBA is, provided by SENDias, I finally felt understood, felt i had information on something so many people mistake for bad behaviour and could relate so much to something for the first time.
As the input we had was focused on the anxiety and not EBSA this is hard to answer. When her EBSA did get really bad, she hit a worrying level with her mental health and as parents, we decided she was not well enough for school. With her few resources available we decided that she could not go back into the school environment. So Home education has made the most difference to her and us.
So far nothing and we're a year in. Social prescriber helps me feel less alone in it
People understanding the issues and my child
Getting the help from the getting more help team
Being listed to by school.
Pressure on family relationships and mental health
Keeping my son home and feeling safe. Constantly re assuring him that he'll not step foot back at Northfield school.
We walk so we have time to talk about day ahead and try and put positive spin on things and give support.
As a qualified and experienced SEN professional myself it has helped that I know the system and the statutory rights my child has to an education. I am always open and honest about my experience and have felt listened to and supported however I do not know whether this would be the

<p>case if I had less knowledge and felt less confident advocating for my child. Things have been put in place very quickly however I know this is not the case for others on the same situation as me.</p>
<p>Doing courses hosted by Tony Attwood on autism in teens which were accessed through my work. Him having the library as a safe space, and a wonderful member of staff there.</p>
<p>Us believing that we knew best for our child and keeping true to that</p>
<p>Understanding from services and school as to why my son was in this situation.</p>
<p>Nothing as of yet just feeling of finally being heard but at the same time feeling blamed.</p>
<p>Sendiass & this Facebook forum</p>
<p>Getting the diagnosis's which showed why my son wasn't managing. School could no longer harass us! My son's TA was our biggest support, she was amazing. Getting my son into AP.</p>
<p>The supportive nature of the school when it came to attendance. My daughter wasn't treated as a number, it was recognised that forcing her into school was not good for her mental health and ultimately we got the right outcome for her. We were protected from the LA when it came to attendance and were never made to feel that we were bad parents</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>School support worker listening to my child</p>
<p>hasn't started</p>
<p>Hearing my child. Believing her when she said she couldn't do it anymore and keeping her safe by keeping her at home. I regret forcing her to go to school in a placement that would not acknowledge or meet her needs for as long as I did. I believed the professionals, when in fact we and her were the experts. The biggest difference was Daisy Chain and finding the right placement.</p>
<p>Getting answers</p>
<p>My constant reassurance to Katie as not getting any from school!</p>
<p>The fact of having a reduced timetable made a huge difference. I am building it up so he now goes in at break time which works for us. I have told the school that this is my plan and this is what we're sticking to.</p>
<p>Occupational Therapy was extremely helpful, unfortunately it was tied to CAMHS mental health services and was withdrawn as soon as my child was deemed not clinically anxious or depressed.</p>
<p>We are on the journey. Nothing has made a difference yet!</p>
<p>Nothing I just want to give up. I honestly wonder if I will make it through each day.</p>
<p>Personally I felt completely lost, worried for our son, his education/lack of it...my own job...I will admit I had some very dark moments where I felt very alone and at a loss where to go for any help...I felt there was only our family going through this.</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>My own understanding and learning journey into ASD and behaviours through building blocks and support in the community</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>CAHMS, the therapist we had was amazing and so understanding and helpful.</p>
<p>Post adoption support, I would have felt very alone without them</p>
<p>Having people to listen</p>
<p>Support of friends and not feeling in it alone</p>

CAHMS - this is a mental health issue not all children fit in to the new testing constant measuring system. Children with neurodivergence definitely dont especially if they have a higher IQ. Both my children now have school based trauma and their education has been the casualty. My oldest child has PDA and it was made worse by the way we have gone from child led learning through play and discovery to constant testing and desk learning from year 1.
Just giving up as forcing made my son worse
Primary were great and supported my daughter, she managed to attend most days although late. Secondary was awful and she's now scared to go.
Being listened too and acknowledged, not dismissed.
Finding a supportive school.
Egglescliffe SENDCO and ATV

What was/is missing on your ESBA journey? If you had a magic wand- what would the support look like.

An understanding of what assessments, support and advice should take place. If parents were informed of the difficulties and best ways they can support their child it would help for all involved. To remove all the obstacles children face so that they can have the same life opportunities as every other child.
Cor! The pressure in the school environment these days is just too much. I feel that teachers/schools try their best but are too focused on targets. They do not question an individuals learning. One full time teacher and part time TA, is not enough to ensure correct learning. It feels that as long as the children get the right number correct, those answers that are incorrect don't matter. I also feel that newly qualified teachers do not understand the complexity of some children or conditions and sometimes think they know best and carry out acts that remove trust for a child.
That the school offered the support when we said he needed it, not after 7 months until he had ticked the boxes in their eyes to say he needed help
For schools and teachers to understand this is a real issue and that not all children are the same
That it took 3 years to get proper help, he's year 10 now
More help from camhs to understand the route cause and give me advice on how to support my son on a morning before school when his anxiety it at its peak.
A key worker to support my child in and out of school. A combined approach to fill the gap between home and school and build trust.
More schools catering for children with SEN, or alternative provision when they are not able. More understanding from school and the LA, not just blame
Child to be supported with sen needs at school, ie support groups/counselling. Help around friendships. To be listened to and understood on challenges she faces etc. Helping these needs would certainly make going to school less challenging on a daily basis.
A specialist provision that caters for highly able but extremely anxious pupils. Support workers need more knowledge of can't and won't. Attendance should not ever be questioned. Support needed around how parents are supposed to be caters and also work. I have had to give up work to look after

<p>my son and there is still no decisions made on what will happen in his future due to mainstream being unsuitable and specialist provision that caters for his needs being non existent.</p>
<p>For all his teachers to understand how ADHD and autism impacts his behaviour and not give him detention for talking. Having someone check in with him to check he's not bullied, and not stop just because he has a good period. For him to have the option to skip focus days, which are hard for him. To have the option to finish a few days before the end of term to reduce burn out</p>
<p>Being listen to and heard front the very start.. The cracks were there well before the breakdown of school. Intervention could have been alot quicker.</p>
<p>More support for parents. It is a very stressful situation. Your child is at breaking point and you have to fight to get the schools and professionals to listen. While you are doing this you also have a child in distress and possibly mentally unwell like my son. You have school on your back about attendance too. It is an awful situation to be in and I think more consideration about the effect on the parents needs to be given.</p>
<p>Some support for him to not be behind. Possibly online lessons, a tutor to spend some time with him or at least some work to be sent home so I can try and help him. Also support with his difficulties with school to try and enable him to reintegrate. Hopefully when they apply for an EHCP after Easter this may happen.</p>
<p>One point of contact</p>
<p>Being listened to from day 1. Getting assessments swiftly which means the correct support can be put in place sooner.</p>
<p>Early intervention, and recognition that the transition between primary and secondary school can be traumatic. Future planning when it comes to EHCP's, recognising that although the primary school setting didn't require an EHCP, the transition and secondary school environment may need regular and frequent reviews and intervention</p>
<p>EHCP upheld, support for me and him and supportive school and if that didn't work funds for education other than in school</p>
<p>No letters reminding me or child of attendance %</p>
<p>what's clearly missing is (school states Stockton dosnt have a ESBA frame work) what ever that means, which I think means the school dont know how to deal with ESBA.</p>
<p>Professionals would be professional. They would see behaviour as communication. They would seek to understand what is driving the behaviour. They would stop acting outside of their expertise. Teachers not acting a parenting experts. Support that hears the voice of the child and respects parents as experts. Professionals are quick to blame the child or the parents. There is a lack of professional reflection and seeking to learn from their mistakes. Plus really good quality training on neurodivergence (autism, ADHD, AuDHD, DCD, dyslexia, Tourette's, etc) and mental health. Moving away from the narrative that children are naughty and its attendance at any cost.</p>
<p>More support to understand my daughter, things always seem to be 6 weeks then that's it. Schools to have more understanding, I'm the one always chasing school about how to engage her more. I get ignored a lot - out of sight out of mind! The main thing missing is a child centre approach right now we are doing not what is right for my daughter but right for attendance figures. If I had a wand someone from school would come and visit Katie at home get to know her so she has at least one trusted person in school, someone to actually give her the time of day from school. Reassurance for parent who are trying with every being in there body to get their child to school, not at the end of every letter mentions legal matters but saying oh we're not at that stage yet!</p>
<p>I would like the school to be more understanding of his needs, and not put it down to his behaviour.</p>
<p>I'm not a professional, but I would suppose if the notes show a child has a history of school based trauma, gender identity issues, is struggling to attend school and has a relevant neurological diagnosis, it's not illogical to include a psychologist</p>
<p>Flexible schooling. More understanding from teachers.</p>

Support help empathy understanding. The ability to school at home so I am not beaten on a morning.
Our son could have accessed school through a reduced timetable...we would have someone to sound off to and not felt threatened over school attendance, fines etc. Access to help and advice when we needed it...since found a group on Facebook that is all about school avoidance.
Not sure
Understanding each child is unique and won't fit in a box regardless of diagnosis. Support when a child is struggling and looking beyond the behaviours is an absolute must!
Ongoing support for my child in school to manage their issues
I had to fight for every bit of help, school were quite dismissive at first. If there was a designated person or an online school that my child could attend and still learn as my child has now missed 2 years of education.
Mainstream schools to take notice and make changes earlier on before it gets to the point of EBSA. No effort made to provide my son an education whilst he has been at home, option of home tutoring, online learning. Easier access to EHCP and specialist schools/AP. Everything is fight
Help to unpick why she struggles with going to school so much
Understanding of the child and how this has massive impact on their health. Also to stop fining people if children can't attend school
The support my daughter clearly needs and not being told they can't see anything when they clearly can as they've put things in places. I just want her to be happy going into school
More outdoor learning KS1 & 2, regulation breaks never take a child's playtime away! Work with parents take away console/tv time. Children need that time to regulate. Help those struggling with independence we all develop differently stop punishing children for forgetting items, wrong shoes, wrong haircut, not reading enough, struggling at spelling. Schools to listen to parents who are saying my child is exploding at the end of the day! Small nurture groups for those children struggling and a safe person they can take to in school if they are finding it difficult. CAHMS to teach support staff techniques to help with anxiety
One to one support
People in secondary who are there to support and help. Guidance teams are not actually welfare/counsellors but just head of years who have no idea about autism/sensory processing etc. Some of the things we have been told to do are highly offensive/laughable!! My daughter wants to attend and wants to learn but struggles. My child is highly functioning so is basically told to get on with it.
School being more understanding. We talked a lot about barriers and behaviours leading up to refusing to go, but they dismissed a lot as our son presented as ok in school (masking). It was not until professional reports we commissioned and trauma therapist, before they got more on board, however it was still a battle.
One to one or at least one to three support to be there on a morning and as a point of contact for both me and my child during the day. Until they were comfortable attending school. Also no pressure on attendance - receiving 'red notices' when the school know we are doing all we can to eliminate the issue is not helpful.
The correct diagnosis for my son, and any support that can help him move into his next stage in life

Is there anything else you would like to add?

No thank you :)					
As said, my daughter never really received intervention for EBSA, this term was only used towards the end of her being at school yet I had clearly stated how hard each day was to get her in and we did this for nearly 3 years. The affect on her has been massive.					
Schools need to start and trust parents instincts rather than referring to tick box system and a generic timeline					
Staff / teachers need training					
I do feel that it's very difficult to get services such as camhs involved.					
I feel the support needed does not exist.					
I'm now being took down the legal route, as I refuse to allow my son to attend. We are awaiting Tribunal next month in hope we can gain Specialist Provision or EOTAS. The LA drag this out as long as possible to not have to give funding					
Still not enough sen support within schools to make children feel safe and supported to actually make them want to go to school.					
Thank you for exploring this it's one of the most difficult issues in our family ATM.					
The stress and pressure on famillies is incomprehensible.. We lost income/jobs/our whole life changed and we lost our beautiful little boy as it broke him.. He's getting there now but it was horrible.. We were in crisis and no one did anything.. Its unfortunate that this hasn't changed					
It would also help massively if services communicated with you properly. Having to chase the LA, school and Camhs is also sole destroying at such a difficult time.					
There needs to be more help and support for both the child and parent regarding EBSA and the threat from school that they are taking you to court for prosecution should not be allowed especially when the parent is constantly keeping in touch, working with the school and trying everything they possibly can.					
Schools need to be more invested and understanding					
I think if a family is forced into private assessments just to get the right support for their child, they should be reimbursed and given a formal apology due to the distress caused to them over many years. It's just not good enough.					
Yes the council that threatened prosecution said their councils support education other than in school but our council said they don't					
Schools need to be more sympathetic to children who suffer from school avoidance.					

<p>Schools are too slow to spot ESBA or those likely to fail to attend, my situation is SEN legal tests weren't followed this delayed pre-emptive action and now iv a child on the edge of school attendance failure of which the best the school can offer is parent courses rather than looking as push pull factors, soft landings and extra support, then when support is recommend via EP its back (school and LA) arguing who funds it, mean the child becomes less engaged and the LA and public purse end up being hit harder as the issue has escalated.</p>	
<p>My daughter and many like her will carry the trauma of her secondary education with her for the rest of her life. She was perceived as a naughty child, rather than a child with difficulties. Secondary school were obsessed with the behaviour and refused to see the reasons for her behaviour. As a girl on the ASD pathway she didn't fit their profile of what autism looks like. Once I heard her voice and stopped sending her to school she slowly started to recover. But everything was a battle. Accessing CANHS, a battle. Getting and EHCP, a battle. Getting the right placement for her, a battle. It damaged my mental health and had a huge impact on our family and my other daughter. Please remember that education is a lifelong journey, GCSE's have no time limit. But if we damage our children's mental health, it's not easy to repair and they and their families will live with that forever.</p>	
<p>If my child was in school and so anxious to come home school would be concerned. Nobody seems to be concerned at how anxious going to school makes my daughter and I have to force her there everyday. Her mental health is at rock bottom and everyday I have to force her into school. I keep being told a reduced timetable can't last forever yet no one is supporting to increase hours it's always me suggesting! Ide also be happy to speak with use of you require any more information.</p>	
<p>ESBA needs to be recognised and plans should be put in place according to each child's needs. Instead of being threatened with an attendance officers and fines. Schools are all about numbers and attendance and its disgusting that all children with issues are just swept to the side and forgotten about.</p>	
<p>Parents are exhausted. This part? The professionals ought to be coming to us, reassuring us they've got it in hand. Not the other way around.</p>	
<p>If my child reacted. Like this towards coming home she would of been put in foster care and there would have been serious concerns. Why can't services just believe parents.</p>	
<p>Our son has so far accessed school every day this term,which is a major achievement for him...but I know he struggles with so many aspects of school life and it hangs over us as a family that he could start refusing again...I've learnt a lot about myself during this time,I've learnt by staying calm,listening to our son,doing the school routine on a morning in a way that keeps him calm and in control works...At the moment...and keeping a count down to the school holidays...and praising every thing he does to constantly boost his confidence 😊</p>	
<p>So many children are being failed by our education system which needs a huge overhaul. Children who are not diagnosed are left in limbo and can't access specialist schools yet can't cope in mainstream. There needs to be more Sen training for teachers and a better understanding of the nervous system within the school environment also.</p>	
<p>School to support my child, without a diagnosis no one is willing to help</p>	
<p>The local authority will not allow my child to have any time off without a Dr's or pharmacist note, which I found is impossible to get. I find this very stressful and worrying as it is me that will be punished.</p>	
<p>It's a very lonely and stressful fight. The system is more damaging to our young people causing severe mental health issues</p>	

The only reason my 14 year old is attending any kind of school is because she needs regulation to keep her in school. She is highly anxious and autistic. The LA put a package in place that was really working. Then it became a financial decision to take away. I know a compromise was made for this year. However I can say without the animal care regulations she will be a full time refuser she has many health issues, and her neurodiversity makes it so hard for her to cope with the school day even specialist. She is having exposure therapy from CAHMS as she is that anxious of people and the outside world. Animal therapy has been the ONLY thing my child has connected with. She has expressed from an early age this is her chosen carer path as animals are more predictable than humans.					
No spaces in other specialist schools so she's stuck in mainstream in massive schools unless we home school, which I don't want to do but I'm on the verge as our family is falling apart, everyday is a nightmare filled with stress and anxiety and I don't know how much longer we can hold it together. School don't see this part and just look at a number of attendance. Parents are behind the scenes desperately trying to get their kids to school not just letting them stay at home laid around because it's an easy option. We want them to be in a school that makes them feel safe, heard and happy.					
This is a real issue which should be given the credit it deserves. All this marketing about 'improving attendance in schools' is fine but there are real exceptions to this rule and it is more triggering/stressful for parents doing their absolute best.					
WE WERE SO LET DOWN BY CHAMS, they wasted so much of our child's life. We had the most backward way, she made us attention her parenting with material I remember from my psychology courses and that was some time. The whole program was about a 1/4 of the training I have had.					

When did you start to have concerns around your child/young person finding attending school difficult?

School nursery, age 3	
May 2021	
March 2023	
Since September 23	
3 years ago	
When he started senior school, mainstream	
When he started nursery.	
Starting Secondary school	
Reception	
	2023
In year 7	
Year 4	

	2022
He has always struggled but still managed to attend until September 2023 when he moved up to seniors. It was too much of a big change for him and he has struggled ever since to attend	
Year6	
When he was in year 5	
2 months into year 7, October 2022	
From starting school all together	
its been going on for over a year.	
My child experienced EBSA 09/20-09/22. Prior to covid she had needed regular reset days due to poor mental health.	
Age of 3	
	2020
In primary school, around year 4	
Entering year 9	
Year 5	
Last October	
Reception	
Age 7	
At age 3	
Transitioning into secondary school.	
December 2022	
Primary school after COVID	
Year 5	
Nursery	
Primary school KS2 when independence is thrust on them age 7-8 the same time in a child's development they realise they are mortal and fears become real	
	14
Year 5	
Year 5 going into year 6 starting to refuse to attend, but had been displaying frustrated and angry behaviours (shouting, arguing and kicking car seats etc) on way home from school since y3, but displayed	
When he was four years old and started reception. He was four in June and started reception the following September.	
Around the age 6	

Is your child/ young person

On a part time timetable but often has days/weeks she does not attend.
Just started Home Education
Not attending
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
Not attending
On a PT timetable currently but still not attending.
Alternate provision
in school full time
Not attending
Removed after being threatened with prosecution
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school part time
in school part time
Not attending
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time
Just started an apprenticeship
in school full time
Phased return
1/2 an hour a day if lucky but not doing work when in

in school full time
Not attending
in school full time
Abbey hill with Daisy chain barn 2 sessions
Not attending
In school but recent attendance is 37%
in school full time
in school full time
in school full time

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

OCTOBER 2024

REPORT OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE – 2023-24

SUMMARY

This report presents a summary of provisional headline performance data for the academic year 2023-24 in all Key Stages for all providers across the Borough.

Primary schools continue to perform well. 95% of schools are good or better (including previous judgements of schools not inspected since academy conversion). This is an improvement on last year and above average for both the region and England as a whole. This reflects the sustained impact of the work of the Education, Inclusion and Achievement Service in monitoring, challenging, intervening and supporting the sector.

Although outcomes have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, outcomes for Stockton-on-Tees pupils in the primary sector are mostly above provisional national average for 2024 on every measure at age-related expectations. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards at the end of KS2 has fallen below the provisional national average.

Secondary outcomes are above 2024 national averages in all areas. These results have been self-reported by the schools and academies themselves.

Post-16 outcomes (A*-E) continue to perform well. The area where they are not above national averages is in the top scores (A* and B) which reflects the regional picture.

Once again, many schools in the Borough have seen much higher than usual numbers of pupils joining the school during the academic year, many from out of area. For example, there have been 108 transfer requests for new arrivals from Nigeria, and 109 from Middlesbrough. However, 27% of requests (374) are deemed 'parental preference' with children moving from one Stockton school to another.

RECOMMENDED THAT THE REPORT BE NOTED

1. Cabinet to note and comment as appropriate on standards and achievements across the Borough.
2. Cabinet to note the strong overall performance of Stockton-on-Tees schools at both primary and secondary phases.

DETAIL

PRIMARY PHASE

1. Early Years Foundation Stage
69.5% of children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2024. This is a 0.2% decrease in comparison with 2023, but 1.8% above the provisional national average (67.7%) and 2.7% above the provisional regional average. As is the case regionally and nationally, the proportion of children in the early years with some form of special educational need and/or disability (SEND) is increasing, although outcomes for this group appear to be improving overall. Staff retention and attendance continues to impact on take-up of advice, support and training across the Early Years, but most schools and settings access training and support in some way. The focus on improving outcomes in communication and language continues and has had additional resource through the Stockton-on-Tees Talks project in the last academic year. **(Appendix 1)**
2. Phonics
The proportion of Year 1 children meeting the standard in the phonics screening check was 81.2%. This equals the outcome in 2023 and is still 2.4% below the 2019 outcome. Nationally, 80.3% met the standard, a 1.4% improvement on the previous year. **(Appendix 2)**
3. Key Stage 1
The government ended statutory assessment at the end of KS1 in 2023. There is, therefore, no data for this key stage.
4. Key Stage 2
In comparison with provisional national averages, Stockton-on-Tees schools continue to perform well at the expected standard. The focus on improving standards in reading led to a 0.7% improvement in comparison with 2023, but the improvement nationally was 1.6%. Outcomes vary widely for schools across the borough, and it is likely that some will change when the revised outcomes are issued in December 2024. However, there will be a continued focus on raising aspirations for all, and particularly on ensuring that schools are doing all they can to promote high standards in reading and writing. **(Appendix 3)**

There will be no progress measures for 2024. This is because the cohort were not assessed at the end of KS1 due to the pandemic (2020).

SECONDARY PHASE

Key Stage 4

5. Since 2018 almost all GCSEs are graded 9 (highest) to 1 (lowest); a grade 4 is a standard pass (broadly equivalent to a C), grade 5 is a strong pass (B/C grade) and grade 7 broadly equivalent to an A. Stockton-on-Tees outcomes are expected to be above 2024 national averages. **(Appendix 4)**
6. Within Stockton-on-Tees's secondary schools outcomes are as follows:
 - Performance continues to be strong in many schools.
 - Those with the highest attainment at the pass rate and above the LA average are All Saints, Ingleby Manor, Egglecliffe, Conyers, Grangefield and Northfield.
 - Of particular note are Grangefield, Ingleby Manor and Northfield who improved on the 2023 result. All Saints, Ingleby Manor and Northfield achieved the same increase at 5+ English and Maths.
 - 4+ English and Maths attainment in most schools has improved compared to 2023 outcomes of the same measure.
 - Two schools did not achieve well, though outcomes have improved significantly from the previous year. These are both MAT schools and will be picked up by their relevant bodies.

Post- 16

7. Stockton Post 16 A level passes were at 97.7% (LA average) This is higher than national average.
8. Conyers and Eggescliffe continue to perform highly, as expected, with 51.2%% and 55.6% A*-B respectively. These outcomes evidence significant improvements from the previous year (+5.3% and +3.8% respectively). For this measure Eggescliffe outcomes are above the national average of 53.6%. **(Appendix 5)**
9. There is also an improvement trend for performance of Technical Level 3 qualifications. Conyers scores per entry improved by almost 9 points.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

20. There has been no consultation as this report is for information only.

NEXT STEPS

21. Multi-agency universal, targeted and bespoke support and challenge will be deployed as appropriate to strengthen further pupil outcomes.

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Education related: YES

Background Papers NO

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: ALL

Property: NONE

APPENDICES

Note: all national data is provisional at this stage. All figures have been rounded to 2 significant figures

Appendix 1 Good Level of Development

Good Level of Development				
'Expected' in all the Prime areas and Literacy and Mathematics from Specific areas.				
%	2019	2022*	2023	2024
Stockton-on-Tees	74%	68%	70%	70%
National	72%	65%	67%	68%

* changes in the assessment criteria from this point

Appendix 2 - Phonics (Key Stage 1)

Phonics Screening Check						
Met the standard Year 1	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023	2024
Stockton-on-Tees	83%	84%	84%	78%	81%	81%
National	81%	82%	82%	76%	79%	80%

Appendix 3

KS2 Headline outcomes – Expected Standard (EXS+) (Provisional data)

	LA 2022 EXS+	National 2022 EXS+	LA 2023 EXS+	National 2023 EXS+	LA 2024 EXS+	National 2024 EXS+	LA v National 2024
Reading	77%	74%	73%	73%	74%	74%	=
Writing	73%	70%	75%	72%	75%	72%	+3%
Maths	76%	71%	76%	73%	76%	73%	+3%
Combined RWM	64%	59%	63%	59%	63%	61%	+2%
English, Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling	74%	72%	75%	72%	73%	72%	+1%

KS2 Headline outcomes – Greater Depth in the Standard (GDS) or Higher Standard

	LA 2022 GDS	National 2022 GDS	LA 2023 GDS	National 2023 GDS	LA 2024 GDS	National 2024 GDS	LA v National 2023
Reading	28%	28%	29%	29%	27%	29%	-2%
Writing	13%	13%	14%	13%	13%	13%	=
Maths	21%	23%	24%	24%	23%	24%	-1%
Combined RWM	7%	7%	9%	8%	7%	8%	-1%
EGPS	28%	28%	29%	30%	29%	32%	-3%

Appendix 4 – Stockton-on-Tees Provisional English and Maths GCSEs 2024

<u>KS4 Basic</u>	Number on Roll	4+					5+				
		in English	in English Language	in English Literature	in Maths	in English & Maths	in English	in English Language	in English Literature	in Maths	in English & Maths
All Saints Academy	178	91.6%	83.7%	90.4%	91.6%	89.3%	84.3%	70.2%	80.9%	76.4%	73.0%
Bishopsgarth	107	57.0%	56.1%	43.9%	42.1%	42.1%	47.7%	44.9%	37.4%	25.2%	24.3%
Conyers	238	82.4%	76.5%	77.7%	75.2%	73.1%	65.5%	60.5%	58.8%	58.0%	50.8%
Egglescliffe	216	91.9%	86.8%	89.4%	83.0%	79.6%	78.7%	69.4%	72.3%	64.7%	58.7%
Grangefield	187	78.1%	70.6%	75.4%	74.9%	70.1%	65.8%	58.8%	59.4%	57.8%	54.0%
Ian Ramsey CE	230	80.0%	76.1%	76.1%	64.8%	63.0%	66.5%	59.6%	58.3%	42.6%	39.6%
Ingleby Manor Free School	134	94.0%	95.5%	81.3%	83.6%	83.6%	88.1%	85.1%	64.2%	65.7%	62.7%
North Shore Academy	128	78.9%	66.4%	73.4%	64.1%	62.5%	57.0%	50.0%	52.3%	45.3%	41.4%
Northfield	272	82.4%	77.6%	79.0%	74.6%	71.3%	70.6%	63.2%	66.5%	58.5%	54.4%
St Patrick's RC	103	73.8%	70.9%	69.9%	67.0%	63.1%	58.3%	55.3%	47.6%	43.7%	34.0%
St Michael's RC	194	80.9%	75.8%	75.8%	62.9%	61.9%	63.4%	55.2%	54.1%	38.7%	34.0%
Our Lady & St Bede RC	208	82.2%	71.6%	77.4%	71.2%	68.8%	67.3%	56.3%	58.2%	46.6%	42.8%
Thornaby Academy	90	66.7%	58.9%	64.4%	56.7%	53.3%	57.8%	45.6%	55.6%	37.8%	34.4%
Stockton LA	2321	81.0%	75.4%	76.5%	71.5%	69.1%	67.9%	60.3%	60.2%	52.4%	48.0%

<u>Attainment 8</u>	Attainment 8 Points -				
	Overall	English	Maths	Ebacc	Other
All Saints Academy	55.2	11.8	11.3	15.6	16.5
Bishopsgarth	31.2	8.0	6.1	0.0	8.5
Conyers	47.7	10.4	9.4	13.4	14.5
Egglescliffe	54.5	11.8	10.5	15.9	16.3
Grangefield	43.2	9.8	8.9	12.5	12.1
Ian Ramsey CE	45.1	10.3	8.4	12.5	14.0
Ingleby Manor Free School	52.0	12.4	10.1	14.7	14.7
North Shore Academy	39.1	8.5	7.6	11.1	-
Northfield	47.3	10.7	9.4	12.9	14.3
St Patrick's RC	43.1	9.2	8.1	10.8	13.2
St Michael's RC	43.7	9.8	7.9	12.5	13.4
Our Lady & St Bede RC	45.2	10.1	8.5	12.5	14.2
Thornaby Academy	34.2	4.5	3.5	10.9	1.0
Stockton LA	45.7	10.1	8.7	12.5	12.7

LA figures include Special Schools

<u>9's</u>	No. of 9's			% of 9's		
	English Language	English Literature	Mathematics	English Language	English Literature	Mathematics
All Saints Academy	11	10	13	6.2%	5.6%	7.3%
Bishopsgarth	1	0	0	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Conyers	8	7	2	3.4%	2.9%	0.8%
Egglescliffe	12	14	12	5.1%	6.0%	5.1%
Grangefield	1	1	3	0.5%	0.5%	1.6%
Ian Ramsey CE	4	2	1	1.7%	0.9%	0.4%
Ingleby Manor Free School	16	7	3	11.9%	5.2%	2.2%
North Shore Academy	5	2	3	3.9%	1.6%	2.3%
Northfield	6	9	7	2.2%	3.3%	2.6%
St Patrick's RC	1	3	1	1.0%	2.9%	1.0%
St Michael's RC	5	5	1	2.6%	2.6%	0.5%
Our Lady & St Bede RC	1	4	1	0.5%	1.9%	0.5%
Thornaby Academy	3	2	0	3.3%	2.2%	0.0%
Stockton LA	74	66	47	3.2%	2.8%	2.0%

LA figures include Special Schools

<u>Ebacc Strong Pass 5+</u>	EBacc APS	Ebacc Entries	Ebacc Achieved
All Saints Academy	5.1	78.7%	33.1%
Bishopsgarth	2.8	21.5%	11.2%
Conyers	4.2	47.5%	18.5%
Egglescliffe	4.9	60.0%	29.4%
Grangefield	4.1	49.7%	21.9%
Ian Ramsey CE	3.8	35.2%	5.7%
Ingleby Manor Free School	5.4	34.3%	24.6%
North Shore Academy	3.8	43.8%	21.1%
Northfield	4.2	50.7%	21.3%
St Patrick's RC	3.6	13.6%	4.9%
St Michael's RC	3.6	13.4%	4.1%
Our Lady & St Bede RC	4.0	51.4%	17.8%
Thornaby Academy	3.2	16.7%	11.1%
Stockton LA	4.1	42.8%	17.9%

KS4 Basic 4+	Number on Roll			4+ in English			4+ in Maths			4+ in English & Maths		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
All Saints Academy	147	151	178	97.0%	94.7%	91.6%	98.0%	92.1%	91.6%	97.0%	92.1%	89.3%
Bishopsgarth	73	75	107	58.0%	46.7%	57.0%	44.0%	32.0%	42.1%	40.0%	28.0%	42.1%
Conyers	222	223	238	88.0%	86.5%	82.4%	82.0%	83.0%	75.2%	78.0%	79.4%	73.1%
Egglescliffe	238	221	216	96.0%	94.0%	91.9%	89.0%	89.4%	83.0%	88.0%	88.5%	79.6%
Grangefield	189	185	187	87.0%	82.2%	78.1%	75.0%	74.1%	74.9%	73.0%	69.7%	70.1%
Ian Ramsey CE	233	236	230	84.0%	83.1%	80.0%	73.0%	70.3%	64.8%	70.0%	68.2%	63.0%
Ingleby Manor Free School	116	117	134	92.0%	90.6%	94.0%	82.0%	78.6%	83.6%	82.0%	77.8%	83.6%
North Shore Academy	126	132	128	84.0%	78.8%	78.9%	74.0%	75.8%	64.1%	71.0%	70.5%	62.5%
Northfield	269	274	272	81.0%	79.2%	82.4%	71.0%	65.0%	74.6%	69.0%	62.8%	71.3%
St Patrick's RC	99	90	103	88.0%	73.3%	73.8%	74.0%	63.3%	67.0%	70.0%	52.2%	63.1%
St Michael's RC	201	214	194	79.0%	72.0%	80.9%	67.0%	71.0%	62.9%	64.0%	71.0%	61.9%
Our Lady & St Bede RC	191	209	208	83.0%	72.2%	82.2%	80.0%	69.9%	71.2%	76.0%	64.1%	68.8%
Thornaby Academy	72	66	90	72.0%	59.1%	66.7%	53.0%	39.4%	56.7%	51.0%	36.4%	53.3%
Stockton LA (ex. Special Schools)	2241	2207	2285	83.0%	73.5%	82.3%	74.0%	73.0%	72.6%	72.0%	69.5%	70.2%
National	***	***	***	74.0%	***	***	68.0%	***	***	64.0%	***	***

KS4 Basic 5+	Number on Roll			5+ in English			5+ in Maths			5+ in English & Maths		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
All Saints Academy	147	151	178	92.0%	88.1%	84.3%	84.0%	75.5%	76.4%	82.0%	72.2%	73.0%
Bishopsgarth	73	75	107	36.0%	34.7%	47.7%	21.0%	16.0%	25.2%	15.0%	14.7%	24.3%
Conyers	222	223	238	82.0%	77.1%	65.5%	66.0%	62.3%	58.0%	64.0%	58.3%	50.8%
Egglescliffe	238	221	216	89.0%	82.1%	78.7%	75.0%	71.5%	64.7%	72.0%	68.1%	58.7%
Grangefield	189	185	187	78.0%	65.9%	65.8%	54.0%	62.2%	57.8%	54.0%	54.6%	54.0%
Ian Ramsey CE	233	236	230	67.0%	70.3%	66.5%	53.0%	46.2%	42.6%	50.0%	43.2%	39.6%
Ingleby Manor Free School	116	117	134	84.0%	82.9%	88.1%	66.0%	57.3%	65.7%	65.0%	57.3%	62.7%
North Shore Academy	126	132	128	70.0%	66.7%	57.0%	64.0%	51.5%	45.3%	60.0%	50.0%	41.4%
Northfield	269	274	272	69.0%	67.5%	70.6%	48.0%	43.1%	58.5%	45.0%	41.6%	54.4%
St Patrick's RC	99	90	103	74.0%	57.8%	58.3%	44.0%	41.1%	43.7%	39.0%	35.6%	34.0%
St Michael's RC	201	214	194	59.0%	64.0%	63.4%	46.0%	42.1%	38.7%	41.0%	38.8%	34.0%
Our Lady & St Bede RC	191	209	208	68.0%	55.0%	67.3%	64.0%	44.0%	46.6%	54.0%	38.8%	42.8%
Thornaby Academy	72	66	90	61.0%	39.4%	57.8%	32.0%	24.2%	37.8%	32.0%	24.2%	34.4%
Stockton LA (ex. Special Schools)	2241	2207	2285	71.0%	67.9%	69.0%	56.0%	51.9%	53.2%	53.0%	48.6%	48.7%
National	***	***	***	62.0%	***	***	51.0%	***	***	46.0%	***	***

Appendix 5 – KS5 outcomes A level outcomes

Post-16 Summary - Provisional Data - V2.0

	Number of A level entries *						
	2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change		
					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023
Conyers	224	226	282	287	59	57	5
Egglescliffe	477	484	465	507	-12	-19	42
SSFC	297	334	285	300	-12	-49	15
The ETC	302	477	480	519	178	3	39
LA	1299	1521	1512	1613	213	-9	101

	Average point score per entry – A Level				% A*- B grades – A levels*					% A*- E grades – A levels*											
	2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change			2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change			2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change		
					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023
Conyers	34.89	38.62	35.25	34.46	0.36	-3.37	-0.79	53.8	59.6	45.9	51.2	-7.9	-13.7	5.3	100.0	99.6	99.3	98.6	-0.7	-0.3	-0.7
Egglescliffe	35.22	40.74	35.03	34.84	-0.19	-5.71	-0.19	53.8	67.1	51.8	55.6	-2.0	-15.3	3.8	99.3	100.0	99.1	98.2	-0.2	-0.9	-0.9
SSFC	27.64	32.22	25.30	27.00	-2.34	-6.92	1.70	29.0	43.4	22.5	28.3	-6.5	-20.9	5.8	93.9	98.2	95.1	95.3	1.2	-3.1	0.2
The ETC	30.90	32.84	30.21	30.27	-0.69	-2.63	0.06	39.7	44.0	37.5	35.5	-2.2	-6.5	-2.0	98.7	99.0	96.3	98.5	-2.4	-2.7	2.2
LA	32.43	36.08	31.70	31.84	-0.73	-4.38	0.14	44.9	53.5	40.6	42.7	-4.2	-12.9	2.1	98.0	99.2	97.5	97.7	-0.6	-1.7	0.2
National	34.01	38.87	-	n/a	-	-	n/a	51.1	62.8	52.7	53.6	1.6	-10.1	0.9	97.5	98.4	97.3	97.1	-0.2	-1.1	-0.2

	Average points for best 3 A levels				Average point score per entry – Applied General					Average point score per entry – Technical General											
	2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change			2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change			2019	2022	2023	2024	Rate of Change		
					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023					2023-2019	2023-2022	2024-2023
Conyers	34.64	37.59	33.56	33.47	-1.08	-4.03	-0.09	38.90	45.80	39.90	38.06	1.00	-5.90	-1.84	28.42	38.75	32.44	41.17	4.02	-6.31	8.73
Egglescliffe	36.83	40.29	35.17	34.87	-1.66	-5.12	-0.30	30.00	32.50	28.33	24.17	-1.67	-4.17	-4.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SSFC	28.10	34.34	25.30	30.70	-2.80	-9.04	5.40	29.13	26.93	26.90	28.30	-2.23	-0.03	1.40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The ETC	35.09	32.35	33.14	33.64	-1.95	0.79	0.50	24.40	31.83	-	32.06	n/a	n/a	n/a	23.37	26.17	-	-	-	-	-
LA**	-	-	-	33.45	-	-	-	28.77	29.06	-	30.75	-	-	-	24.74	28.46	-	-	-	-	-
National	33.96	39.20	35.78	-	1.82	-3.42	-	28.91	31.98	29.56	-	0.65	-2.42	-	28.64	30.56	28.52	-	-	-	-

* Results not available via Performance Tables website - data taken directly from the proformas completed by colleges.

** LA results calculated internally to show performance across 4 colleges. The Performance Tables data for Stockton does not include ETC as provisional results were not available at time of circulation

2019 & 2022 data checked against Performance Tables website 17-08-23.

Appendix 6 – Primary attainment by school 2024

All data is unvalidated and should be treated with caution

Cell highlighting: red indicates more than 5% below national average, yellow indicates within 5% (+ or -) national average, green is more than 5% above national average.

School Name	Academy Sponsor	EYFS	KS1	End of KS2			
		GLD	Y1 Phonics	CRWM EXS+	Reading EXS+	Writing EXS+	Maths EXS+
Local Authority		69.5%	81.2%	63.4%	74.1%	75.3%	76.3%
NCER National (Early Indicator)		67.7%	80.2%	60.6%	74.2%	71.8%	73.1%
Ash Trees	Ascent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Bader Primary	1590	73.1%	77.1%	60.8%	72.5%	72.5%	76.5%
Barley Fields	Prince Regent St.	72.2%	87.8%	75.3%	85.4%	93.3%	85.4%
Bewley Primary	1590	71.4%	87.0%	55.8%	75.0%	76.9%	71.2%
Billingham South Community Primary	Maintained	62.7%	82.0%	47.4%	56.1%	64.9%	68.4%
Bowesfield Primary	Maintained	62.5%	57.1%	42.9%	42.9%	66.7%	71.4%
Christ the King RC Primary	NPCAT	70.4%	76.3%	79.2%	89.6%	81.3%	87.5%
Crooksbar Primary	Ad Astra	84.2%	80.5%	59.0%	79.5%	76.9%	71.8%
Durham Lane Primary	Maintained	86.7%	88.9%	82.8%	86.2%	89.7%	86.2%
Egglecliffe CE Primary	Durham Diocesan	75.9%	96.6%	89.3%	92.9%	89.3%	96.4%
Fairfield Primary	Maintained	76.7%	87.5%	77.6%	82.8%	86.2%	86.2%
Frederick Nattrass Primary	NET	56.7%	74.1%	78.6%	82.1%	82.1%	85.7%
Greengates	Horizons	n/a	0.0%	6.7%	26.7%	6.7%	13.3%
Hardwick Green Primary	Enquire	60.0%	70.0%	37.7%	49.1%	69.8%	49.1%
Harewood Primary	Maintained	66.7%	81.4%	66.7%	75.9%	79.6%	74.1%
Harrow Gate Primary	Enquire	43.4%	74.5%	50.9%	64.9%	61.4%	66.7%
Hartburn Primary	Prince Regent St.	78.7%	88.0%	78.7%	86.7%	92.0%	86.7%

High Clarence Primary	Enquire	35.7%	90.0%	47.1%	52.9%	52.9%	70.6%
Holy Trinity Rosehill	Maintained	57.7%	93.3%	66.1%	82.1%	73.2%	85.7%
Ingleby Mill Primary	Maintained	74.6%	98.2%	76.5%	87.7%	82.7%	86.4%
Junction Farm Primary	Vision	80.6%	91.7%	84.5%	93.1%	94.8%	86.2%
Kirklevington Primary	1590	87.0%	88.2%	75.0%	85.0%	85.0%	90.0%
Layfield Primary	1590	72.4%	76.9%	65.4%	80.8%	76.9%	80.8%
Levendale Primary	1590	87.5%	75.9%	73.3%	86.7%	80.0%	90.0%
Mandale Mill Primary	Maintained	60.5%	71.8%	16.3%	40.8%	42.9%	20.4%
Mill Lane Primary	Maintained	59.3%	64.5%	40.0%	53.3%	60.0%	60.0%
Myton Park	Maintained	82.8%	86.7%	60.0%	76.7%	86.7%	76.7%
Norton Primary	NET	66.7%	79.5%	81.3%	93.8%	81.3%	91.7%
Oakdene Primary	Enquire	76.7%	93.3%	83.3%	88.9%	86.1%	94.4%
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary RC Primary	BHCAT	71.4%	81.8%	39.3%	71.4%	71.4%	46.4%
Oxbridge Lane Primary	Maintained	76.7%	85.0%	65.1%	72.1%	74.4%	81.4%
Pentland Primary	1Excellence	65.7%	82.4%	45.0%	62.5%	55.0%	60.0%
Preston Primary	Lingfield	78.3%	84.0%	83.3%	87.5%	87.5%	95.8%
Prior's Mill CE Primary	Melrose	76.0%	84.0%	69.2%	80.0%	83.1%	80.0%
Roseberry Primary	Maintained	56.8%	74.4%	41.9%	51.2%	62.8%	62.8%
Rosebrook Primary	Ad Astra	64.0%	80.7%	45.8%	55.9%	62.7%	66.1%
St Bede's RC Primary	BHCAT	76.7%	93.3%	70.0%	76.7%	76.7%	83.3%
St Cuthbert's RC Primary	BHCAT	60.0%	72.4%	66.7%	70.0%	76.7%	76.7%
St Francis of Assisi CE Primary	Dales	72.5%	91.4%	83.6%	90.2%	86.9%	98.4%
St Gregory's RC Primary	BHCAT	65.5%	85.2%	48.4%	67.7%	61.3%	64.5%
St John's CE Primary (Baptist)	Maintained	36.4%	61.5%	45.2%	47.6%	59.5%	59.5%
St John's RC Primary	BHCAT	68.8%	50.0%	44.4%	50.0%	72.2%	66.7%
St Joseph's RC Primary, Billingham	BHCAT	72.7%	92.5%	70.0%	87.5%	75.0%	82.5%
St Joseph's RC Primary, Norton	BHCAT	65.4%	96.0%	41.7%	54.2%	62.5%	54.2%

St Mark's Church of England Primary School	1Excellence	92.3%	93.1%	64.8%	75.9%	85.2%	75.9%
St Mary's CE Primary	Durham Diocesan	71.4%	85.7%	58.3%	75.0%	75.0%	58.3%
St Patrick's RC Primary, Stockton-on-Tees	BHCAT	71.0%	95.7%	82.5%	87.5%	90.0%	92.5%
St Patrick's RC Primary, Thornaby	NPCAT	72.0%	84.0%	58.3%	66.7%	75.0%	73.3%
St Paul's RC Primary	BHCAT	68.4%	90.0%	62.1%	72.4%	75.9%	62.1%
St Thérèse of Lisieux RC Primary	NPCAT	80.0%	89.7%	76.7%	83.3%	83.3%	96.7%
The Glebe Primary	Maintained	70.0%	81.8%	61.1%	70.4%	74.1%	83.3%
The Links Primary	Vision	87.5%	85.7%	83.3%	86.7%	93.3%	90.0%
The Oak Tree Primary	NET	64.3%	69.7%	80.0%	82.5%	85.0%	82.5%
Thornaby CE Primary	Dales	55.6%	70.0%	47.6%	69.0%	52.4%	69.0%
Tilery Primary	Maintained	55.3%	73.3%	52.8%	61.1%	61.1%	75.0%
Village Primary	Prince Regent St.	73.3%	33.3%	55.6%	81.5%	70.4%	74.1%
Whinstone Primary	Vision	79.5%	87.8%	64.4%	78.2%	74.7%	77.0%
Whitehouse Primary	1590	68.4%	77.8%	74.5%	83.6%	76.4%	85.5%
William Cassidi CE Primary	Maintained	76.9%	85.0%	64.3%	78.6%	75.0%	82.1%
Wolviston Primary	Prince Regent St.	66.7%	100.0%	83.3%	83.3%	91.7%	91.7%
Wynyard CE Free School	Melrose	83.3%	93.3%	80.0%	88.3%	90.0%	90.0%
Yarm Primary	Enquire	75.0%	83.7%	73.3%	84.4%	75.6%	91.1%

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Appendix 7 – Data Source weblinks

- EYFSP Provisional Data – NCER Nova Reports. Data submitted to the LA for Stat Return purposes however results have not been released via DfE yet. Release due November 2024. [Early years foundation stage profile results, Academic year 2022/23 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov/uk/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-academic-year-2022-23)
- KS2 Provisional Data - [Key stage 2 attainment, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov/uk/key-stage-2-attainment-academic-year-2023-24)
- KS4 Provisional Data – LA Data provided directly by Schools. Data due to be released by DfE around mid October - [Statistics: GCSEs \(key stage 4\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/statistics/gcse-key-stage-4)
- KS5 and A-Level Provisional Data – LA Data provided directly by Schools. Some regional data can be found at: [Infographics for A level results, 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/infographics/a-level-results-2024)

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AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 OCTOBER 2024

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Lead Cabinet Member - Children and Young People - Councillor Lisa Evans

CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2024

Summary

This report outlines how the Local Authority (LA) is meeting its duty to secure sufficient childcare and includes information about the supply of and demand for childcare, details on any gaps in provision and an action plan on how they will be addressed.

The Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare – June 2018, requires Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable and within available resources, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children). Local authorities are also required to report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting this duty.

Recommended that the report be noted.

Detail

1. The Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare – June 2018, requires Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable and within available resources, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).
2. To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should take into account:
 - what is ‘reasonably practicable’ when assessing what sufficient childcare means for their area,
 - the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers, in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists,
 - the state of the labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce,
 - the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience, and expertise,

- should encourage schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am until 6.00pm and in school holidays,
 - should encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market; and
 - should encourage providers to take sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources to support them.
3. The Local Authority is required by legislation to maintain a service that provides information, to parents and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area, as listed in Schedule 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 and from 1st September 2017 publish this information electronically on the local authority website and update it at a minimum termly on 1st January, 1st April, and 1st September ensuring parents are aware of:
 - Early education places for children from 9 months to four year olds;
 - The option to continue to take up their child's 15 hour early education place until their child reaches compulsory school age;
 - How to identify high quality provision in their area.
 4. The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment provides information on how the Local authority is meeting its legal duty as detailed earlier in this report.
 5. Take-up of universal 3 & 4 year places continues to be high at 104.2% take-up, which is higher than the national average of 94.9%. 4yr old take-up is 105.5% and 3 year old take-up is 102.9%, as per figures from the January 2024 census collection.
 6. Take-up of 30 hour funded childcare places for working parents of 3 & 4 year olds is 1636 which is a slight decrease of 3.59% (61 places), compared to summer 2023 data.
 7. Take-up of the new 15 hours funded childcare places for working parents of 2 year olds is 850 places for the summer term.
 8. The table on page 17 of the assessment shows the take-up at a ward level for 30 hour funded places and 15 hour funded places for working parents by provider type.
 9. Stockton continues to maintain a high percentage take-up of 15 hour funded places for 2 year olds where parents are on certain government benefits (86.94%), although this is a decrease of 8.4% on the previous year.
 10. To be noted the number of children eligible for 2yr olds is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions and doesn't include any on-line eligibility applications received by Stockton.
 11. In some cases, the percentage take-up up of 2 year places by ward can be over 100%, this is due to parents accessing childcare outside of the ward area where they reside, as parents may travel to access a childcare provider of choice if in a different ward area.
 12. At the time of writing the report there were 955 recorded vacancies in registered provision for children aged 0-4 years old. Vacancies are monitored on a termly basis to ensure there are sufficient places available for parents. If there was a significant reduction in places steps would be taken to ensure parents had access to alternative places near to either their place of work or home.
 13. When new providers enter the market, the assessment is used to inform them of any gaps in childcare at a ward level basis. If there was a need, the authority would work with providers to offer additional places by either increasing number of places or opening new provision.

14. Childcare costs in Stockton are lower than regional and national charges. A full-time place for a child in a nursery averages £257.15 per week in Stockton, regional £268.22 and national 290.77. A full-time place with a childminder in Stockton is £159.61, regionally £236.06 and nationally £254.12.
15. Funded childcare places for working parents are available for children aged from 2 to 4 years old. 15 hours for 2 year olds and 30 hours for children aged 3 or 4 years old.
16. From September 2024 15 hour funded places will be available to working parents with children aged 9-23 months. At the time of writing this report 814 applications had been made to HMRC for the new funded childcare. A further 323 applications had been made for 2 year 15 hour funded places.
17. Parents on certain government benefits, are eligible for 15 hours funded childcare for 2 year olds if they meet the eligibility criteria.
18. Tax Free Childcare is available to offset the cost of childcare for working parents with children aged 0-11, this is a government subsidy of up to £2,000 a year for each child or up to £4,000 a year for each child if they are disabled.
19. Stockton has a good range of quality childcare across the borough with 100% of group settings rated good or outstanding, as of July 2024. However, the percentage rated good or outstanding for all providers, including childminders is 84.7% which is lower than the national percentage (98%) and regional percentage (98%) as of March 2024.
20. The number of nurseries, pre-school, and out of school settings remains relatively unchanged but there continues to be a reduction in the number of registered childminders with a decrease of 10 in the last year equating to a loss of 84 childcare places, this may impact the sufficiency of places available to meet the needs of parents/carers.
21. Roll out of the new entitlements for working parents has commenced. 15 hours funded childcare became available to eligible working parents of two year olds as of April 2024, and parents of children aged nine months up to two years will become eligible from September 2024. The full 30 hours funded childcare will be available from September 2025.
22. The Government has uplifted the hourly funding rate paid to providers, to deliver the funded hours offers in England, helping providers to manage cost pressures. The Government provided £204 million in 2023-24, paid from September 2023, and £288 million in 2024-25.
23. Local authorities have received capital funding towards the cost of creating additional early years places to meet demand for the new entitlements. Funding has been awarded to 17 childminders, 10 private nurseries and 2 schools. This is creating an additional 206 childcare places for children aged 9 months to 2 years old which will be available from the autumn term.
24. The balance of the capital funding for early years places will be used to increase places in identified hotspots across the borough.
25. Local authorities have also been funded to increase the supply of wraparound care, so that parents of primary school age children can access childcare between 8am and 6pm – tackling the barriers to working caused by limited availability of wraparound care.
26. 14 schools and 1 childcare provider have been awarded funding to either create or expand wraparound provision from September 2024.

27. Work will continue in the autumn term to encourage more schools or childcare providers to create or expand their wraparound provision as per the approved delivery plan submitted to DfE.

Strategic Priorities

28. To ensure there are sufficient early years funded places available across the borough, closely monitoring demand in the ward areas identified as hot spots.
29. Further development of wraparound childcare places as approved in the DfE delivery plan.
30. Continue to promote early years funded places to working parents and parents on certain government benefits, and ensure parents are aware of the Families Information Service to support them in finding childcare to meet theirs and their child's needs, including providing advice on funded childcare and/or childcare benefits available to them.
31. Undertake a detailed analysis of the supply of early years and wraparound childcare provision for children with SEND and other vulnerable groups, understanding the needs of parents, and the issues childcare providers have in offering places to these groups.

Consultation and Engagement

32. Consultation has been undertaken with parents/carers and childcare providers to inform the sufficiency assessment.
33. Providers were surveyed in February 2024 to gather information on their current demand for childcare and insight on their future sustainability and barriers to delivering on the expansion to childcare. This survey had a total of 83 responses.
34. Parents/carers were surveyed in April 2024 to gather information on demand for wraparound childcare, and any barriers to them taking up wraparound childcare. This survey had a total of 949 responses.

Next Steps

35. The sufficiency assessment will be placed on the Stockton Information Directory once it has been through the Cabinet process, so it is available for parents/carers, childcare providers, and employers.
36. Work will continue to assess sufficiency of places to ensure that parents/carers are able to access an early years funded place or a wraparound childcare place.
37. Further work to be undertaken on meeting the needs of vulnerable groups to ensure they can access high quality, affordable childcare.
38. Work with childcare providers and schools to either expand or create places in areas of where there is high demand.

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Stockton-on-Tees

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

August 2024



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Introduction

The Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and the associated statutory guidance for local authorities on Early Education and Childcare - June 2018, requires Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Local Authority) to secure sufficient childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 - 14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).

The duty is detailed in the following sections of the Acts:

Childcare Act 2006

- Section 6 secures sufficient childcare for parents;
- Section 7 secures free early years provision free of charge;
- Section 7A discharges its duty;
- Section 9 gives LA's the power to attach requirements to the arrangements they make with providers (other than the governing body of a maintained school) to deliver childcare including free early years provision;
- Section 9a allows regulations to be made which prescribe the requirements local authorities may or may not impose when they make arrangements;
- Section 12 provides information, advice, and assistance to parents about childcare in the area;
- Section 13 to secure the provision of information, advice and training to childcare providers and childcare workers

Childcare Act 2016

- Section 1 places a duty on the secretary of state to secure the equivalent of 30 hours free childcare over 38 weeks of the year for qualifying children;
- Section 2 allows the Secretary of state to discharge her duty under section 1 of the Act by placing a duty on English local authorities to secure free childcare for qualifying children;

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should consider:

- what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means for their area;
- the state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers, in a particular locality and the amount and type of supply that currently exists;
- the state of the labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce;
- the quality and capacity of childcare providers and childminders registered with a childminder agency, including their funding, staff, premises, experience, and expertise;
- should encourage schools in their area to offer out-of-hours childcare from 8.00am until 6.00pm and in school holidays;
- should encourage existing providers to expand their provision and new providers to enter the local childcare market; and
- should encourage providers to take sustainable business approach to planning and signpost providers to resources to support them

The Local Authority is responsible for determining the appropriate level of detail in the report, geographical division, and date of publication. However, the report should include:

- a specific reference to how we are ensuring there is sufficient childcare available to meet the needs of: children with special educational needs and disabilities disabled children; children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit; children with parents who work irregular hours; children aged two, three and four taking up free places; school age children; and children needing holiday care.
- Information about the current and projected supply and demand of childcare for particular age ranges of children, and the affordability, accessibility, and quality of provision; and
- Details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

In addition, the Local Authority is required by legislation to maintain a service that provides information, to parents and prospective parents on the provision of childcare in their area, as listed in Schedule 1 of the Childcare Act 2006 and from 1 September publish this information electronically on the local authority website and update it at a minimum termly on 1 January, 1 April and 1 September, ensuring parents are aware of:

- Early education places for two, three and four year olds;
- The option to continue to take up their child's 15 hour early education place until their child reaches compulsory school age;
- How to identify high quality provision in their area.

The Stockton-on-Tees childcare market

Stockton-on-Tees has a robust childcare market with a combination of 47 privately owned and voluntary sector nursery/pre-school childcare providers, 102 childminders and 5 out of school clubs. Primary schools (60) play a key role in offering the majority of universal 15 hour places for 3 & 4 year olds and 83% are now offering 30 hour free childcare places, 10 also deliver 2yr funded places, and many offer before and after school places for school aged children. Three Independent Schools also provide early years places for 3 & 4 year olds.

The Local Authority has an excellent relationship with childcare providers and good partnership working has ensured that the quality of settings in Stockton-on-Tees is exceeding the national average, ensuring the closing of the gap for the most vulnerable children.

The Local Authority works closely with the childcare sector to explore sufficiency issues and identify workable solutions to meet any gaps in provision.

The report

This report considers what the Local Authority means as 'sufficient childcare' in the borough and includes the following:

- Background and contextual information regarding population, Labour Market Information (LMI), early years and childcare numbers across the borough.
- Information about the supply of childcare for particular age ranges of children, and the affordability, accessibility, and quality of provision.
- The state of the local childcare market, including the demand for specific types of providers, in particular ward areas and the amount and type of supply that currently exists.
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers.
- Details of how gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.

This Assessment Report will be updated and reported to the Council's Cabinet for endorsement annually. The Assessment Report will also be made available and accessible to parents on the

www.stocktoninformationdirectory.org/childcare-listings

Stockton-on-Tees in context

Economic Geography

Location and Economic Profile

Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts, a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas, and picturesque villages. The Borough covers approximately 20,000 hectares.

The principal settlements are Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Norton and Yarm; whilst Wynyard is expected to grow into a substantial residential location.

The River Tees courses through the Borough and sustains a variety of uses; from a working river upstream; a leisure destination; and forming part of the tranquil green corridors.

The Borough is bounded by County Durham to the north; Darlington to the west; Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Hartlepool to the east; and Hambleton to the south.

Stockton-on-Tees benefits from good access to the strategic road network - A1M, A19, A66 and A67 - and a network of bus routes that provide frequent services to connect residents to work and leisure destinations predominantly across Tees Valley, and for the movement of goods and services.

There are six train stations in total providing frequent access to destinations in Tees Valley and across the North, and a direct link to London via the East Coast Mainline.

The Borough is home to Teesside International Airport.

The Borough forms part of the Tees Valley Combined Authority wider functioning area, which is home to some 678,200 people.



Demographic profile

In 2020 the population was 198,253 living in around 88,785 dwellings. In the last ten years, it is estimated that the population has risen by 6,429 people between 2010 and 2020. The population in the Borough is projected to grow to 199,862 by 2031 which is an increase of 0.82% over the ten-year period 2021-2031. 17.23% of the population within Stockton-on-Tees are children and young people aged (0-14), which is higher than across the North East (16.55%) and slightly lower than England (17.37%).

Estimated resident population in '000s (% of total population)

Projected Year	2020	2024	2028	2032
Age 0-4	11,099	10,343	10,023	9,905
	5.60%	5.18%	5.00%	4.94%
Age 5-9	13,027	12,087	11,106	10,755
	6.57%	6.05%	5.54%	5.37%
Age 10-14	12,973	13,472	12,719	11,647
	6.54%	6.74%	6.35%	5.81%
All Ages	198,253	199,757	200,364	200,459

Source: ONS Population projections for Local Authorities - Table 2

The percentage of the Borough's population from a black minority ethnic background decreased from 5.4% in 2011 to 1.1% in 2021. The largest minority ethnic group is Asian or Asian British, this group accounts for 4.6% of the population, within this group, the largest BME group is Pakistani or British Pakistani.

Using indices of multiple deprivation, the Borough is ranked 113 most deprived out of the 317 local authorities in England. However, whilst 19.99% of the population live within the top 20% of most deprived areas of England, 19.38% live in the 20% least deprived areas

¹ Council Tax

² Census

³ IMD 2015

Labour Market Information (LMI)

In 2022 there were estimated to be around 82,000 jobs in Stockton-on-Tees. 13,000 jobs (15.9% of jobs) were in the “Wholesale and Retail Trade” sector and 10,000 (12.2% of jobs) in manufacturing, whilst it only makes up 7.6% of the workforce in Great Britain, and 11,000 (13.4% of jobs) were in “Human Health and Social Work Activities”. These sectors make up similar proportions of the labour market to figures for England.

Employee jobs by industry 2022	Stockton-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees %	North East %	Great Britain %
Mining And Quarrying	300	0.4	0.1	0.2
Manufacturing	10,000	12.2	9.7	7.6
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning	300	0.4	0.4	0.4
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management	700	0.9	0.7	0.7
Construction	6,000	7.3	4.4	4.9
Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair of Vehicles	13,000	15.9	13.7	14.0
Transportation And Storage	4,500	5.5	5.2	5.0
Accommodation And Food Service Activities	6,000	7.3	8.0	8.0
Information And Communication	2,250	2.7	3.1	4.6
Financial And Insurance Activities	1,250	1.5	2.2	3.3
Real Estate Activities	900	1.1	1.5	1.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	7,000	8.5	5.6	9.1
Administrative And Support Service Activities	6,000	7.3	8.0	9.0
Public Administration and Defence	3,500	4.3	7.1	4.7
Education	7,000	8.5	9.9	8.6
Human Health and Social Work Activities	11,000	13.4	16.0	13.5
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1,250	1.5	2.1	2.4
Other Service Activities	1,250	1.5	2.0	2.0

Source: [Nomis](#)

² Census

³ IMD 2015

Economic activity (Jan 2023 - Dec 2023)

Economic activity refers to the number or percentage of people of working age who are in employment plus those that are unemployed (actively seeking and available for work). Economic activity rates in Stockton-on-Tees (77.7%) are higher than the Tees Valley (76.0%) and North East (75.7%) and lower than Great Britain (78.8%).

Of the people aged 16 to 64 years living in Stockton-on-Tees, 74.1% were employed in the year ending December 2023. This is a slight increase compared with the year ending December 2022 when the local rate was 73.7%.

Across the North East in the year ending December 2023, 72.8% of people aged 16 to 64 were employed. This was higher than the previous year when 70.5% of people were employed.

Unemployment estimates are modelled to improve their precision compared to those based only on responses provided via the Annual Population Survey. Around 3,900 people aged 16 and over in Stockton-on-Tees were unemployed in the year ending December 2023. This is a rate of 4.0%. This was a decrease compared with the year ending December 2022 when the unemployment rate was 4.2%.

Across the North East, from the year ending December 2022 to the year ending December 2023, there was a decrease in the unemployment rate from 4.6% to 3.9%.

Unemployment across Great Britain rose slightly between the year ending December 2022 and the year ending December 2023, going from around 1,180,000 people (3.6%) to around 1,240,000 (3.7%).

Indicator Numbers in Bold (Figures and percentages relate to the population aged 16-64 unless stated)	Stockton-on-Tees	Tees Valley	North East	Great Britain
Economic activity	96,800 (77.7%)	318,800 (76.0%)	952,800 (75.7 %)	31,908,900 (78.8%)
Employment rate	92,400 (74.1%)	303,500 (72.3%)	918,700 (72.8%)	30,696,300 (75.8%)
Employees	82,500 (66.6%)	270,600 (65.0 %)	814,800 (65.1%)	26,837,400 (66.3%)
Self-Employment	9,400 (7.0%)	31,800 (7.0%)	99,600 (7.4%)	3,774,000 (9.3%)
Unemployment (Model-based) Percentage is proportion of economically active population	3,900 (4.0%)	15,300 (4.8%)	34,100 (3.9%)	1,240,000 (3.7%)

Patterns of work

A slightly lower percentage of employee jobs are full-time (more than 30 hours a week) in Stockton-on-Tees compared to the wider North East Region and the rate for Great Britain.

Employee jobs (2021)	Stockton-on-Tees	North East	Great Britain
Full-Time	69.5	67.9	68.8
Part-Time	30.5	32.1	31.2

Working age benefits

The claimant count includes those seeking Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), which is an employment benefit payable to people under pensionable age who are available for and actively seeking work. It also includes those on Universal Credit who are the equivalent of JSA claimants due to being out of work and having requirements to look for work.

Stockton-on-Tees has now rolled out the “full service” of Universal credit so all new claimants will claim the benefit. Under Universal Credit a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Jobseeker’s Allowance so the number of people recorded as being on the claimant count is likely higher than before the rollout and comparisons to other areas and previous years are difficult.

As of May 2024, a total of 4,875 people made up the ‘claimant count’, which is 4.0% of the working age population. The highest number of claimants is in the 25-49 age group, making up almost 60% of the claimant count in Stockton-on-Tees.

The Claimant Count in Stockton-on-Tees was lower than in the previous year. The Claimant Count in Stockton-on-Tees was 4,885 in March 2024, down from March 2023, when there were 5,140 claimants.

The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 years in Stockton-on-Tees who were claiming unemployment-related benefits was 4.0% in March 2024, a decrease compared with March 2023 when it was 4.2%

Claimant Count by Gender (May 2024)

	Stockton-on-Tees		North East	Great Britain
	(Numbers)	(%)	(%)	(%)
All People	4,875	4.0	4.1	3.9
Males	2,950	4.9	5.0	4.5
Females	1,925	3.1	3.2	3.3

Source: ONS claimant count (NOMIS).

Note: % is the number of claimants as a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64 and gender

Claimant Count by Age (May 2024)

	Stockton-on-Tees		North East	Great Britain
	(Numbers)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Aged 18 to 24	1,030	7.7	5.9	5.1
Aged 25 to 49	2,780	4.5	4.8	4.5
Aged 50+	1,055	2.6	2.7	2.8

Source: ONS claimant count (NOMIS)

Note: % is number of claimants as a proportion of resident population of the same age

Income

Based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2023 the average gross weekly pay of Stockton-on-Tees residents is £619.5; more than the average for the North East region (£613.7), but lower than Great Britain as a whole (£682.6).

Average (Median) gross weekly pay 2023

Gross Weekly Pay	Stockton-on-Tees	North East	Great Britain
Full-Time Workers	£619.5	£613.7	£682.6
Male Full-Time Workers	£687.9	£648.9	£728.3
Female Full-Time Workers	£531.8	£568.9	£628.8

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (Nomis)

Notes: Median earnings in pounds for employees living in the area.

Potential impact from approved and strategic housing developments

The Local Authority considers any potential future children yield numbers in terms of planning sufficient childcare places from approved housing developments across the borough. All housing developments must include a percentage of affordable housing within its development that is considered when planning any future childcare arrangements. The Local Authority also considers the impact on the 'childcare offer' of the other strategic sites (1,000 or more homes) and their likely pupil yield numbers.



The demand for childcare

Population of children

Estimated population aged 0-15 as a percentage of total by Ward area and 5 year change					
Ward	2022 Population (0-15 year olds)	2022 Population (All Ages)	2027 Projected Population (0-15 year olds)	2027 Projected population (All Ages)	% of ward population 2027 (0-15 year olds)
Billingham Central	1502	7,393	1389	7355	18.89%
Billingham East	1640	7,528	1517	7489	20.26%
Billingham North	1016	6,471	940	6437	14.60%
Billingham South	1484	8,001	1373	7959	17.25%
Billingham West & Wolviston	759	5,818	702	5788	12.13%
Bishopsgarth and Elm Tree	950	6,327	879	6294	13.96%
Eaglescliffe East	1150	6,155	1064	6123	17.37%
Eaglescliffe East	1150	6,155	1064	6123	17.37%
Eaglescliffe West	1155	6,373	1068	6340	16.85%
Grangefield	599	3,174	554	3157	17.55%
Hardwick and Salters Lane	2042	8,216	1889	8173	23.11%
Hartburn	1409	8,626	1303	8581	15.19%
Ingleby Barwick North	3233	12,615	2991	12549	23.83%
Ingleby Barwick South	1996	10,746	1846	10690	17.27%
Mandale and Victoria	1908	8,650	1765	8605	20.51%
Newtown	1028	4,493	951	4470	21.27%
Northern Parishes	1344	6,636	1243	6601	18.83%
Norton Central	1176	6,458	1088	6424	16.93%
Norton North	940	6,190	870	6158	14.12%
Norton South	1191	7,782	1102	7742	14.23%
Ropner	2051	8,768	1897	8722	21.75%
Roseworth	1911	8,487	1768	8443	20.94%
Southern Villages	409	2,639	378	2625	14.41%
Stainsby Hill	1365	7,282	1263	7244	17.43%
Stockton Town Centre	2003	8,741	1853	8696	21.31%
Village	1560	7,781	1443	7741	18.64%
Yarm	1669	9,635	1544	9585	16.11%

Sources: Population Estimates for Electoral Wards in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022 Mid-Year Population Estimates, UK, June 2022 www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/tablej24zeronetmigrationnaturalchangeonlyvariantenglandpopulationinagegroups

Estimated child population by 5-year age band as a percentage of total by Ward area

Ward	Age 0-4		Aged 5-9		Aged 10-14	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Billingham Central	382	5.17%	468	6.33%	850	11.50%
Billingham East	475	6.31%	538	7.15%	1,013	13.46%
Billingham North	281	4.34%	304	4.70%	585	9.04%
Billingham South	423	5.29%	475	5.94%	898	11.22%
Billingham West & Wolviston	179	3.08%	265	4.55%	444	7.63%
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	271	4.28%	282	4.46%	553	8.74%
Eaglescliffe East	251	4.08%	379	6.16%	630	10.24%
Eaglescliffe West	268	4.21%	346	5.43%	614	9.64%
Fairfield	351	3.91%	469	5.22%	820	9.13%
Grangefield	146	4.60%	166	5.23%	312	9.83%
Hardwick & Salters Lane	554	6.74%	688	8.37%	1,242	15.12%
Hartburn	358	4.15%	446	5.17%	804	9.32%
Ingleby Barwick North	796	6.31%	1101	8.73%	1,897	15.04%
Ingleby Barwick South	440	4.09%	626	5.83%	1,066	9.92%
Mandale & Victoria	567	6.55%	643	7.43%	1,210	13.99%
Newtown	306	6.81%	305	6.79%	611	13.60%
Northern Parishes	363	5.47%	399	6.01%	762	11.48%
Norton Central	349	5.40%	356	5.51%	705	10.92%
Norton North	271	4.38%	300	4.85%	571	9.23%
Norton South	349	4.48%	361	4.64%	710	9.12%
Ropner	661	7.54%	644	7.34%	1,305	14.89%
Roseworth	490	5.77%	619	7.29%	1,109	13.07%
Southern Villages	110	4.17%	126	4.77%	236	8.95%
Stainsby Hill	370	5.08%	437	6.00%	807	11.08%
Stockton Town Centre	690	7.89%	667	7.63%	1,357	15.53%
Village	372	4.78%	506	6.50%	878	11.29%
Yarm	451	4.68%	549	5.70%	1,000	10.38%

Source: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN and those registered with a disability)

The Department for Education (DfE) 'Children with SEN' published 20/06/2024 based on where the pupil attends schools using the January 2024 school census indicated that there was a total of 1,725 pupils with Education, Health and care Plan, an increase of 117 pupils on the previous year. Pupils receiving SEN support has increased by 131 pupils compared to the previous year.

Pupils in all school with EHC (Education Health and Care) Plans/Statements including independent schools and general hospital											
20/21			21/22			22/23			23/24		
Total pupils	Pupils with statements	%	Total pupils	Pupils with statements	%	Total pupils	Pupils with EHC plans	%	Total pupils	Pupils with EHC plans	%
34,029	1355	4.0	34,228	1485	4.3	34,397	1608	4.7	34,679	1725	5.0

Pupils in all schools receiving SEN support including independent schools											
20/21			21/22			22/23			23/24		
Total pupils	Pupils receiving SEN Support	%	Total pupils	Pupils receiving SEN Support	%	Total pupils	Pupils receiving SEN Support	%	Total pupils	Pupils receiving SEN Support	%
34,029	4,034	11.9	34,228	2,221	12.3	34,397	4,360	12.7	34,679	4,491	13.0

Children 0-5 with SEN or a Disability accessing early years in either a PVI (Private, Voluntary, or Independent) setting or school

For the academic year 2023/24 there were 94 children aged 0-5 assessed through the Early Years One Point Panel for additional support/funding who were accessing early years and childcare provision in Stockton-on-Tees, this is an increase of 34% compared to 2022/23.



The supply of childcare

Registered childcare

Data has been supplied by the Local Authority's Families Information Service (FIS).

Since September 2008 childcare for children aged less than 8 years old has had to be registered on one of two Ofsted childcare registers.

- The Early Years Register (EYR) - all childcare providers caring for children aged up to five are required to join the Early Years Register (unless exempt).
- The Ofsted Childcare Register (OCR) - this has two parts:
 - The compulsory part - providers of childcare to children aged 5 to 7 years must register on the compulsory part of the OCR (unless exempt);
 - The voluntary part - providers of childcare to children aged 8 and over, and care for children of any age that is activity based or provided in the child's own home, can choose to be registered on the voluntary part of the OCR if they meet the requirements.

The following section provides an overview of registered provision, including places in school nurseries.

A map providing the spread of childcare across Stockton can be found here [Childcare_Map_July_2024.pdf](#) (stocktoninformationdirectory.org).

Type of provision	Number of registered childcare places							
	0-1 years	2 years	3-4 years	5-7 years	8+ years	Total places	% all places	Number of providers
Childminding	109	118	112	309	158	806	10.17%	102
Day Nursery	542	829	870	252	82	2575	32.48%	41
Out of School Care	0	0	119	331	202	652	8.22%	22
Pre-school / Playgroup	6	87	89	0	0	182	2.30%	6
Maintained Nursery	0	147	3566	0	0	3713	46.83%	60
Totals by age range	657	1181	4756	892	442	7928		
% of all registered places	8.29%	14.9%	59.99%	11.25%	5.57%			
Total registered places 0-5 years = 5172 (79.54% of total places)								

Source: Source: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council FIS July 2024

Comparing number of childcare places to 2023, there has been a reduction of 84 childminding places, an increase of 133 day nursery places, pre-school places have decreased by 40 places, and out of school places have stayed the same. The number of childminders has reduced by 10, number of day nurseries has increased by 1, number of playgroups has decreased by 1, and out of school providers has decreased by 1.

Primary schools offer childcare which wraps around the school day. 93% of primary schools offer breakfast clubs and 62% offer some form of after school childcare. From September 2024 fifteen schools are either creating new wraparound places or expanding their current provision, so that parents can access wraparound care between the hours of 8am and 6pm to enable them to take up work or increase their working hours.

Geographical distribution of childcare places and vacancies

The following table details the number of early years childcare places and vacancies based on Local Authority ward areas.

Ward	Number of childcare places and vacancies by age					
	0-1 years		2 years		3-4 years	
	Places	Vacancies	Places	Vacancies	Places	Vacancies
Billingham Central	7	3	18	10	10	4
Billingham East	31	7	61	11	60	14
Billingham North	3	2	3	1	3	1
Billingham South	30	11	50	18	47	24
Billingham West & Wolviston	5	1	15	5	14	5
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	8	6	35	14	35	21
Eaglescliffe East	108	3	80	11	108	17
Eaglescliffe West	1	1	10	0	30	0
Fairfield	17	5	22	9	31	10
Grangefield	12	8	25	6	20	4
Hardwick	2	0	30	0	30	0
Hartburn	30	16	83	15	84	19
Ingleby North	19	8	25	7	45	27
Ingleby South	62	12	79	16	143	10
Mandale & Victoria	36	12	58	26	49	15
Newtown	18	13	34	20	33	19
Northern Parishes	49	6	31	13	31	17
Norton Central	15	0	27	1	27	0
Norton North	15	13	30	25	25	21
Norton South	15	3	39	9	47	10
Ropner	22	16	45	13	37	11
Roseworth	16	10	25	12	25	5
Southern Villages	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stainsby Hill	46	33	59	39	107	46
Stockton Town Centre	0	0	24	2	0	0
Village	41	31	65	37	71	46
Yarm	49	13	61	24	78	32
Total	657	233	1034	344	1190	378

Source: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council FIS July 2024

Vacancies

Vacancies are calculated against registered places. Many settings are likely to operate fewer places than they are registered for. For example, a childminder may be registered for 6 children but could choose to care for no more than 4. The FIS had records of 955 (33.14%) vacancies in registered provision as of July 2024 for children aged 0-4 years old.

Charges

The FIS hold detailed information on charges for individual settings, across a number of different charging patterns. Below are the average charges by setting type. For further information on an individual providers charges please visit www.stocktoninformationdirectory.org.

Charging period	Type of provision / Charges					
	Day Nursery	Childminder	Pre-School playgroup	Out of School Club	School Breakfast Club	School After School Club
Per hour	£8.69	£4.56	£5.54	£5.70		
Per session / half day	£36.34	£17.28	£17.12	£13.89	£2.84	£3.95
Per day	£55.28	£36.17	£39.32	£31.99		
Per week	£257.15	£160.97	£220.00	£93.33		

Source: Stockton-on-Tees BC FIS July 2023

Compared to 2023 charges the cost of a full-time place in a day nursery has increased by 9%, a full-time place with a childminder has remained relatively the same, the weekly cost with a playgroup has increased by 45%. The weekly cost for a place in an out of school club has remained the same along with a breakfast club or after school delivered by a school.

Comparing childcare costs to the national childcare survey 2024, produced by Coram Family and Childcare the cost per week in a day nursery for a child under 2 in England is £305.11 and for the North East is £268.22, for childminders the cost is £254.12 and £236.06, respectively. For a child age 2 years old the cost per week in a day nursery in England is £290.77 and for the North East is £249.28 and for a childminder is £253.83 in England and £236.42 in the North East.

Working parents can claim support with childcare costs through the Tax Free Childcare scheme which provides a contribution of up to 20% towards the cost of childcare, this also includes registered after school activities.

Opening times

As with charges there is considerable variation in opening times, both within and between different types of provision. For further information on an individual provider's opening and closing times please visit www.stocktoninformationdirectory.org/childcare-listings.

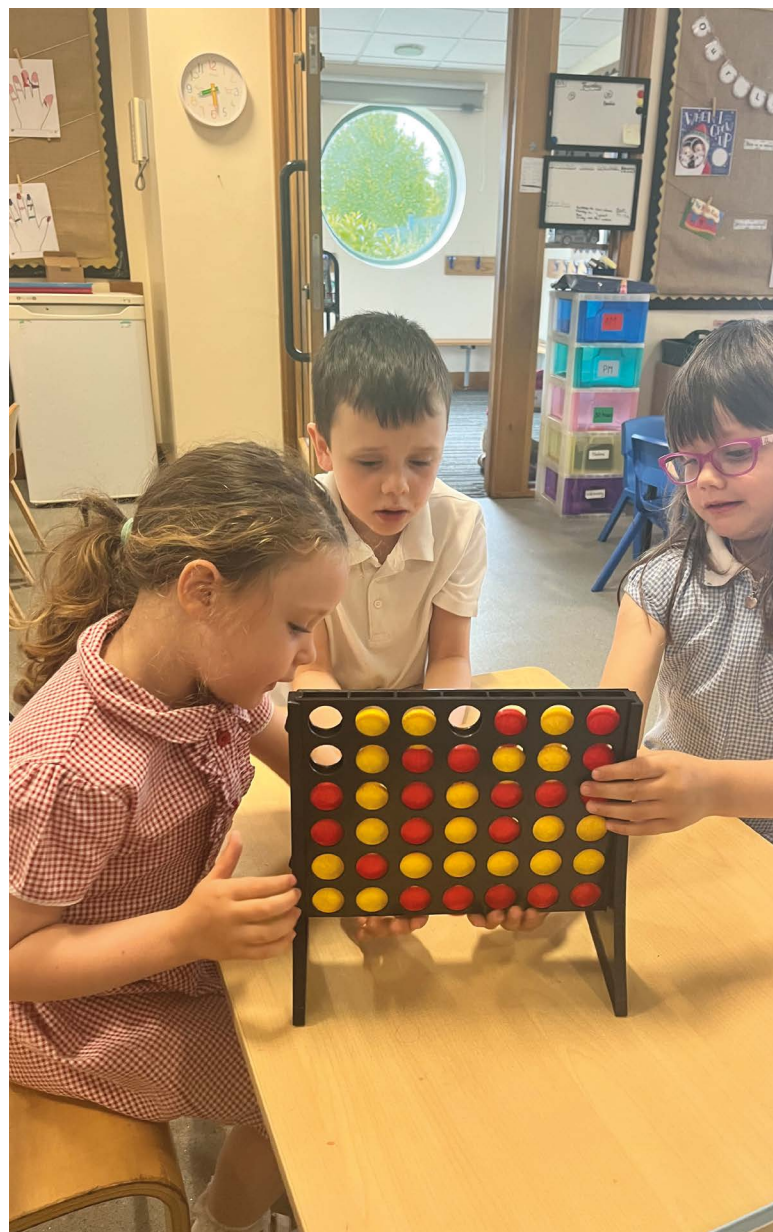
Most nurseries open from 7.30am until 6.00pm, playgroups tend to open from 9.00am until 3.30pm. Breakfast clubs are delivered by private providers and schools opening from 7.30am until the start of the school day. After school clubs again are delivered by private nurseries and schools opening after the end of the school day and closing between 4.30pm and 6.00pm. Childminders offer childcare from early in the morning (from 6.00am) until late in the evening (up to around 10pm), occasional overnight care and at weekends, including Sundays, they also offer care wrapped around the school the day. Currently 2 childminders open on Saturdays and 2 childminders open on a Sunday.

Holiday Provision

Stockton-on-Tees has a range of holiday provision across the borough available to parents/carers with school age children, delivered by private nurseries and childminders (97). A total of 36 providers and 97 childminders offer holiday provision. Some providers/childminders only offer places to children up to the age of 8 years old; the rest offer places to children up to age 11 years; one provider offers places up to the age of 12 and one provider offers places up to the age of 14.

Most of the provision (18) is open from 7.30am closing at 6pm, with some (11) open from 7am.

Costs for holiday provision range from £25 per day to £69 per day in nursery/out of school clubs. Childminders charge costs range from £25 to £46 per day. Compared to national data the average weekly costs for holiday provision in England is £173.14 and for the North East is £166.28



Early Years funded places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds

All children who meet the prescribed criteria can take up high quality early education, regardless of their parents' ability to pay - benefiting their social, physical, and mental development and helping to prepare them for school. Evidence shows that regular good quality early education has lasting benefits for all children.

Universal entitlement

The Local Authority is required by legislation to secure early education places by offering 570 hours a year over no fewer than 38 weeks for every child in the borough from the relevant date; until the child reaches compulsory school age (the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday). Take-up of the universal entitlement for 3 & 4 year olds as of January 2024 is 104.2%, which is higher than the regional average of 100.4% and the national average of 94.9%. The take up by age is 105.5% for 4 year olds and 102.9% for 3 year olds.

Compared to 2023 the percentage accessing universal provision has increased by 3.2%.

104.2%

3 & 4yr olds accessing
15hrs of childcare

102.9%

3yr olds accessing
15hrs of childcare

105.5%

4yr olds accessing
15hrs of childcare



Extended entitlement 30 hours funded childcare for working parents

Working parents (employed persons, self-employed persons, and parent on zero hours contracts) of three- and four-year-olds can access a total of 30 hours of funded childcare per week, over 38 weeks or the equivalent number of hours across more weeks per year.

As of April 2024, working parents of two year old children can access a total of 15 hours funded childcare per week over 38 weeks or the equivalent number of hours across more weeks per year. From September 2024 this will also be available for children aged from nine months old.

From September 2025, working parents of children aged from nine months to 4 years old can access a total of 30 hours funded childcare per week.

No. of 2, 3 & 4 year olds taking up a 15/30 hour funded childcare place, by type of provider and ward						
Ward	No. of 2 year olds accessing a place (15 Hours)			No of 3&4 years olds accessing a place (30 Hours)		
	PVI	Childminder	Maintained nursery	PVI	Childminder	Maintained nursery
Billingham Central	13	0	6	10	0	49
Billingham East	62	3	0	61	2	52
Billingham North	43	1	0	0	3	0
Billingham South	0	5	0	37	3	14
Billingham West & Wolviston	19	12	0	9	13	82
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	8	8	0	3	9	69
Eaglescliffe East	120	3	1	92	1	56
Eaglescliffe West	15	2	0	10	0	45
Fairfield	13	4	0	7	8	71
Grangefield	5	0	0	3	0	3
Hardwick	8	2	3	4	4	25
Hartburn	66	9	0	86	7	14
Ingleby North	10	16	0	14	19	24
Ingleby South	52	26	0	82	28	67
Mandale & Victoria	24	0	1	28	0	40
Newtown	16	0	0	22	0	7
Northern Parishes	69	0	0	54	0	40
Norton Central	25	0	0	17	0	20
Norton North	0	1	0	0	3	24
Norton South	15	5	0	32	3	0
Ropner	5	7	0	8	3	5
Roseworth	7	0	5	5	0	22
Southern Villages	0	0	0	0	0	10
Stainsby Hill	17	6	0	51	2	17
Stockton Town Centre	0	3	1	0	0	19
Village	52	2	3	15	0	34
Yarm	40	11	1	27	7	35
Total	704	125	21	677	115	844

Source Stockton-on Tees Borough Council FIS July 2024

Compared to 2023 30 hour place take-up for 3&4 year olds has decreased by 3.59% (61 places). Stockton-on-Tees has a conversion rate of 91.59% for parents applying for a 30 hour code with HMRC and then going on to access a 30 hour place with a childcare provider/school.

From data provided by DfE as at 31/7/24 there have been 1137 applications for 15 hours funded childcare from parents with children aged from 9 months to 2 years old who will be eligible for a place from September 2024.

Under year 1 old
125 applications

1 year old
689 applications

2 year old
323 applications

Take-up of 2 year places for parents on certain government benefits by ward

Ward	No. accessing a place	No. eligible as per DWP data	Percentage take-up
Billingham Central	23	25	92%
Billingham East	37	39	94.87%
Billingham North	0	7	0%
Billingham South	35	37	94.59%
Billingham West & Wolviston	7	5	140%
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	8	9	88.89%
Eaglescliffe East	23	11	209.09%
Eaglescliffe West	6	5	120%
Fairfield	7	7	100%
Grangefield	20	7	285.71%
Hardwick	35	53	66.04%
Hartburn	12	9	133.33%
Ingleby North	3	17	17.65%
Ingleby South	18	11	163.63%
Mandale & Victoria	49	52	94.23%
Newtown	32	42	76.19%
Northern Parishes	5	10	50%
Norton Central	22	36	61.11%
Norton North	7	10	70%
Norton South	31	31	100%
Ropner	43	47	91.49%
Roseworth	40	53	75.47%
Southern Villages	0	2	0%
Stainsby Hill	41	35	117.14%
Stockton Town Centre	28	60	46.67%
Village	32	36	88.89%
Yarm	15	10	150%
Total	579	666	86.94%

Source Stockton-on Tees Borough Council FIS July 2024

Two year old entitlement for parents on certain government benefits

At the end of July 2024, there were 579 two year olds accessing a free childcare place, this equates to 86.94% of eligible children accessing a place. Compared to summer 2023 data this is a decrease of 8.4%. Percentage take-up is calculated from information received from DWP on the number of potentially eligible 2yr olds.

Disability access fund

The disability access fund is available for childcare providers to claim an additional £910 per child per year for a child attending their setting who is attracting disability living allowance. It was introduced in April 2017 and is for children who are claiming early years entitlement for children from aged nine months to four years old. The provider can spend the funding on resources, equipment, minor adaptations, or staff training to benefit the child. In 23/24 48 children benefitted from this funding, this is a decrease of 0.04% compared to 22/23 data.

Early years pupil premium

Early years pupil premium is an extra amount of funding providers receive to help them support their most disadvantaged children. Children qualify if they aged from nine months to four years old and are receiving government-funded early education, and their parents receive benefits used to access free school meals.

As at summer 2024 892 children benefitted from this funding, this is an increase of 29% compared to summer 2023 data, this is due to the funding now being available to children from aged 2 years old, previously this was only available to children aged 3 or 4 years old claiming early years funding.

Quality of provision

Stockton-on-Tees has a good range of quality childcare across the borough with the majority (96.8%) of provision rated good or outstanding as of July 2024, which is lower than the national percentage (98%) and regional percentage (98%) as of 31 March 2024. Support and challenge are given to settings and childminders that are less than good to improve provision and Ofsted ratings.

100% of settings are graded good or outstanding, which is higher than the national percentage 97% and the regional percentage 89%. 95% of childminders are graded good or outstanding which is lower than the national percentage 97% and the regional percentage 98%.

100%
group settings
Good or Outstanding

95%
childminders
Good or Outstanding

96.8%
all childcare providers
Good or Outstanding

If you would like to read the latest Ofsted report for an individual setting or childminder these can be found on the Stockton Information Directory on each childcare provider record at www.stocktoninformationdirectory.org/childcare-listings.

Analysis of provider and parent surveys

Provider Survey

A provider survey took place in February to assess the preparedness of the sector for the new entitlements. There was a total of 75 responses to the survey from group settings and childminders, which is a response rate of 49%.

Group settings

31 (65%) nurseries and playgroups out of a total of 48 nurseries responded to the survey.

When asked how many new funded 2 year olds would be accessing a place from the summer term, 299 two year olds already attending their provision would be converting to a funded place and 117 would be new starters. 216 would be accessing additional paid for hours.

When asked about demand for 2yr places, 7 providers would not be able to meet demand and 1 was unsure. 10 were already holding a waiting list for 2yr olds.

When asked about demand for children aged 9 months to 23 months, 7 do not offer places to this age group and 1 could not meet demand for this age group. 14 providers could meet demand for this age group and 9 were unsure whether they could meet demand.

86 places would be available for the younger age group, of those providers who can meet demand.

5 providers need to reconfigure rooms to meet demand for the younger age group. 4 were unsure whether they needed to reconfigure rooms. 5 were not delivering to this age group and 17 did not need to make any physical changes.

80 additional places can be created for this age group.

10 providers require capital funding to offer places for 2yr olds and 7 providers would require funding to offer places to 9mth-23mth old children.

When asked if they would limit places for 2yr olds - 5 responded yes and 10 were unsure.

When asked if they would limit places for 9mth-23mth olds - 8 responded yes and 9 were unsure.

Of those providers who responded 20 needed to recruit staff. The qualification levels of those need to be recruited are:

Level 3 - 23

Level 2 - 10

Unqualified - 3

3 providers need to recruit unqualified, level 2 and level 3, 7 providers need to recruit level 2 and 3, 14 need to recruit level 3 only and 2 need to recruit level 2 only.

7 providers would like specific training for babies, blossoming babies, sleep and hazard awareness for babies.

Childminders

44 (42%) out of 105 childminders responded to the survey

When asked how many new funded 2 year olds would be accessing a place from the summer term, 68 two year olds already attending their provision would be converting to a funded place and 6 would be new starters. 40 would be accessing additional paid for hours.

When asked about demand for 2yr places, 7 childminders would not be able to meet demand and 1 was unsure. 9 already hold a waiting list for 2yr olds.

When asked about demand for children aged 9 months to 23 months, 1 does not offer places to children aged 9mths up to 23mths. 9 cannot meet demand for this age group. 25 childminders can meet demand for this age group and 9 were unsure whether they could meet demand.

34 places would be available for the younger age group, of those childminders who can meet demand.

3 childminders would need to reconfigure rooms to meet demand for the younger age group. 4 were unsure whether they needed to reconfigure rooms. 2 were not delivering to this age group and 35 did not need to make any physical changes.

13 additional places can be created for this age group.

5 childminders require capital funding to offer places for 2yr olds and 5 childminders would require funding to offer places to 9mth-23mth old children.

When asked if they would limit places for 2yr olds - 8 responded yes and 8 were unsure. 18 would limit the number of places.

When asked if they would limit places for 9mth-23mth old - 6 responded yes and 8 were unsure. 12 would limit the number of places.

Of those childminders who responded 2 needed to recruit staff. The qualification levels of those need to be recruited are:

Level 3 - 2

Level 2 - 1

Unqualified - 0

1 childminder would like training for baby sign, baby yoga, baby massage and 1 would like in depth SEND.

Parent/Carer Wraparound Childcare Survey

A survey was undertaken in April to assess the demand for wraparound childcare for primary school aged children of working parents. The results of the survey can be found at appendix 1.



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report Settings Summary

Event	Wraparound childcare survey - families
Total Responses	949
Total Respondents	1
Questions	All
Filter	<i>(none)</i>
Pivot	<i>(none)</i>
Document Name	
Created on	2024-04-12 14:43:08

Table .1

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Q23	34
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Q1

Q1

Question responses: **949 (100.00%)**

What is your home postcode?

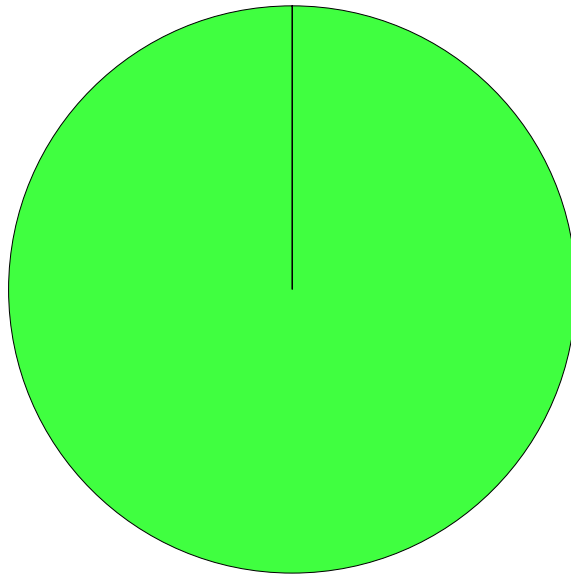


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	100.00%	100.00%	949
■ [No Response]	0.00%	--	0
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q1

How many children do you have who are under five years old?

Question responses: **949 (100.00%)**

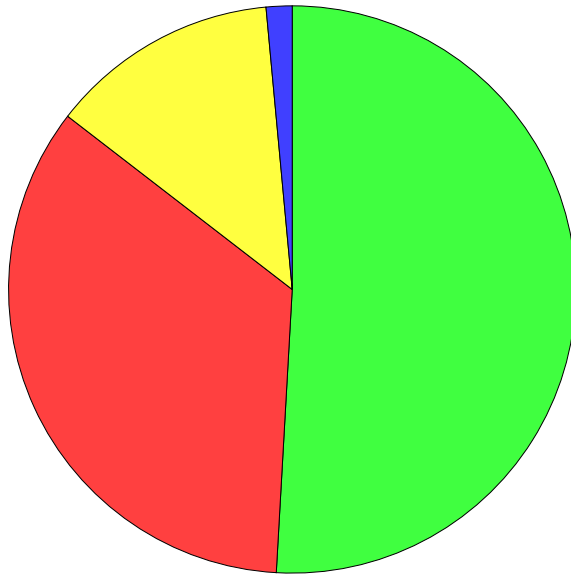


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
None	50.90%	50.90%	483
One	34.56%	34.56%	328
Two	13.07%	13.07%	124
Three or more	1.48%	1.48%	14
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q2

Q2

Question responses: **640 (67.44%)**

Will you be looking for any childcare outside school hours for these children when they start school?

Before school

Question responses: **578 (60.91%)**

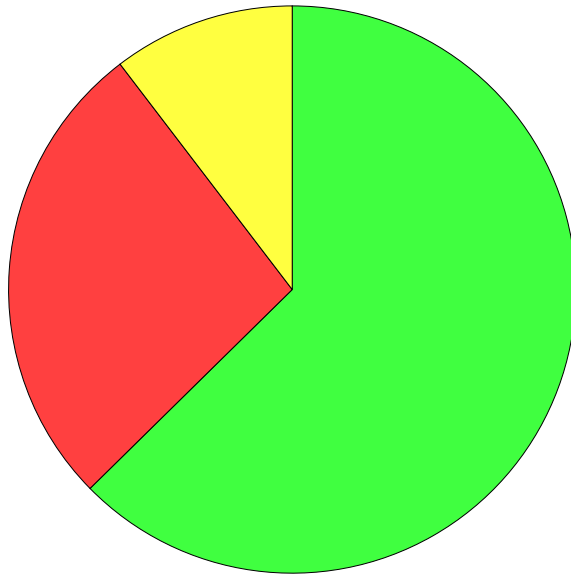


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Yes	38.15%	62.63%	362
■ No	16.44%	26.99%	156
■ Not sure	6.32%	10.38%	60
■ [No Response]	39.09%	--	371
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

After school

Question responses: **614 (64.70%)**

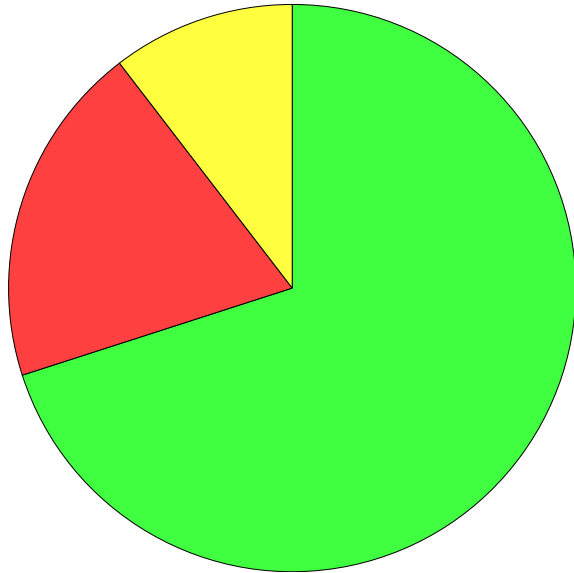


Table .3

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Yes	45.31%	70.03%	430
■ No	12.64%	19.54%	120
■ Not sure	6.74%	10.42%	64
■ [No Response]	35.30%	--	335
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .4

During school holidays

Question responses: **540 (56.90%)**

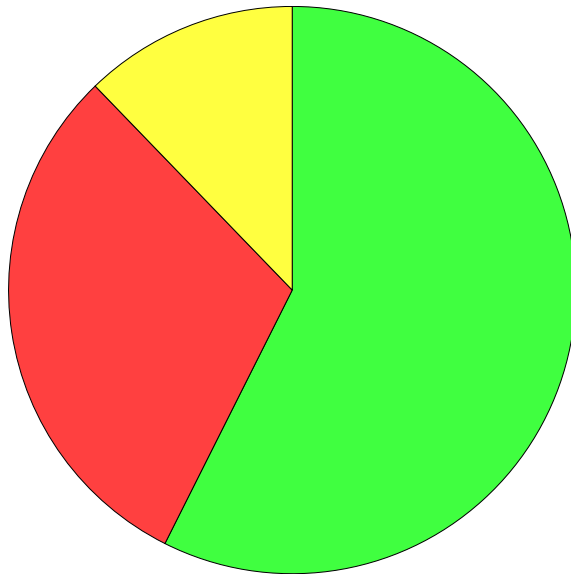


Table .5

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Yes	32.67%	57.41%	310
No	17.28%	30.37%	164
Not sure	6.95%	12.22%	66
[No Response]	43.10%	--	409
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .6

Q3

Question responses: **342 (36.04%)**

Please tell us about any concerns or other comments you may have about finding suitable childcare.

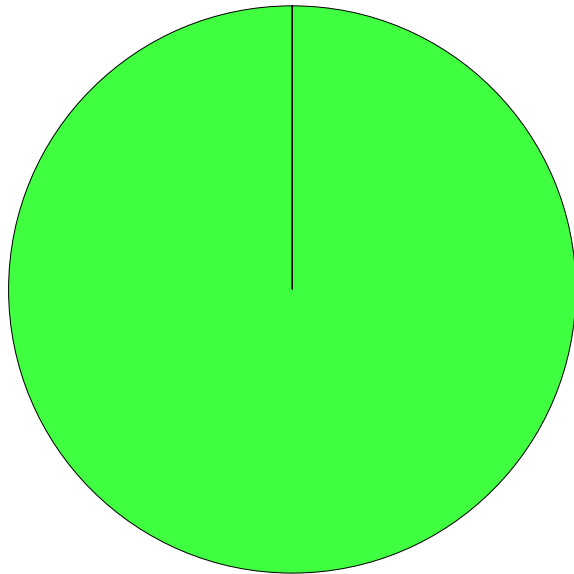


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	36.04%	100.00%	342
■ [No Response]	63.96%	--	607
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Question responses: **526 (55.43%)**

Will you be interested in taking up any of the following free early education entitlements if your family is eligible? Please tick any that you would consider using for your children when they are the correct age.



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15 hours for all three- and four-year-olds	11.34%	16.07%	17.18%	163
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 hours for three- and four-year-olds in working families	22.69%	32.15%	34.35%	326
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15 hours for two-year-olds in working families (from April 2024)	10.58%	14.99%	16.02%	152
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 15 hours for children 9 to 23 months old in working families (from September 2024)	7.86%	11.14%	11.91%	113
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 hours for children 9 months and older in working families (from September 2025)	9.46%	13.41%	14.33%	136
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not sure	8.63%	12.23%	13.07%	124
<input type="checkbox"/> [No Response]	29.44%	--	44.57%	423

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	1,437

Table .2

Table .1

Q5

Q5

Question responses: **949 (100.00%)**

Do you currently have any children who are in primary school?

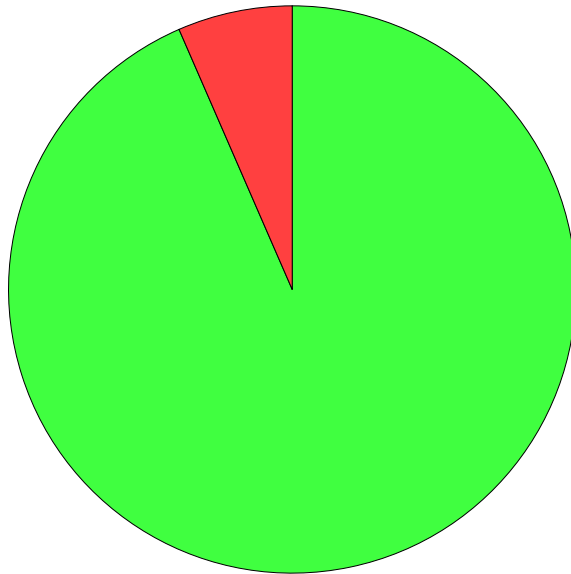


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Yes	93.47%	93.47%	887
■ No	6.53%	6.53%	62
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q6

Question responses: **949 (100.00%)**

Name of the school your child attends

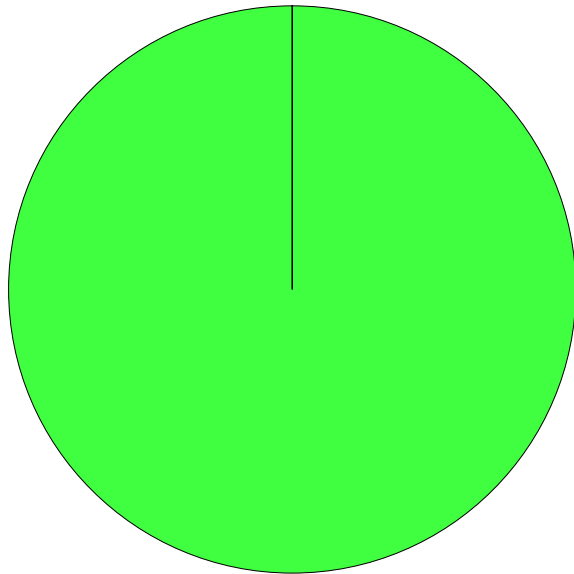


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	100.00%	100.00%	949
■ [No Response]	0.00%	--	0
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q7

Q7

Question responses: **949 (100.00%)**

Years 1 or 2 (ages 5-7)

Question responses: **687 (72.39%)**

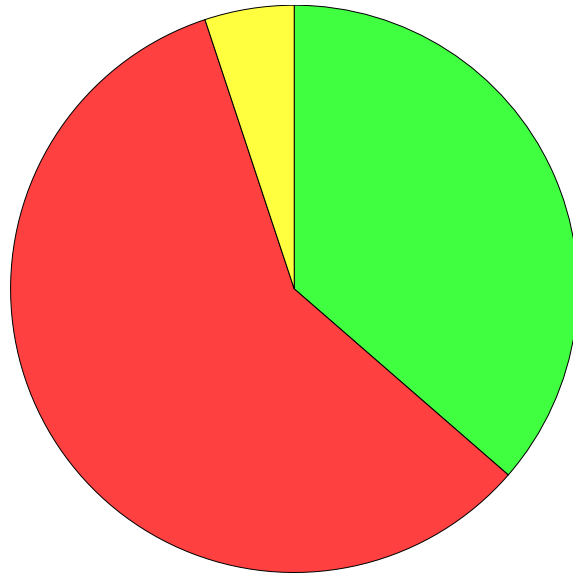


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
None	26.34%	36.39%	26.34%	250
One	42.36%	58.52%	42.36%	402
Two	3.69%	5.09%	3.69%	35
Three or more	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
[No Response]	27.61%	--	27.61%	262
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	949

Table .2

Years 3 or 4 (ages 7-9)

Question responses: **637 (67.12%)**



Table .3

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
None	31.61%	47.10%	31.61%	300
One	33.61%	50.08%	33.61%	319
Two	1.90%	2.83%	1.90%	18
Three or more	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
[No Response]	32.88%	--	32.88%	312
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	949

Table .4

Years 5 or 6 (ages 9-11)

Question responses: **553 (58.27%)**

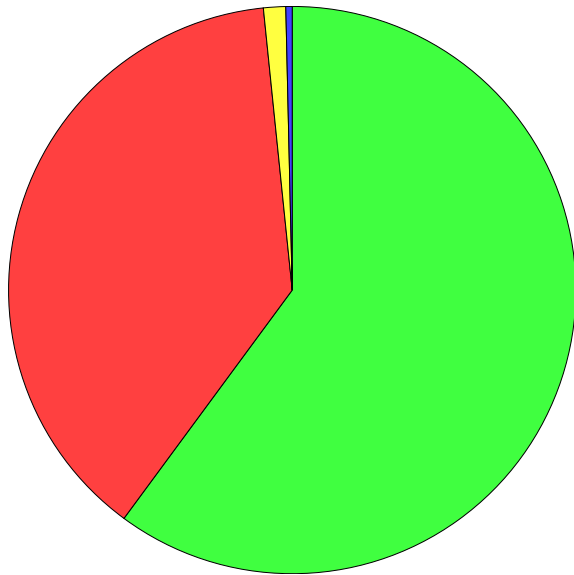


Table .5

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
None	35.05%	60.11%	35.09%	333
One	22.32%	38.27%	22.34%	212
Two	0.74%	1.26%	0.74%	7
Three or more	0.21%	0.36%	0.21%	2
[No Response]	41.68%	--	41.73%	396
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	950

Table .6

Q8

Question responses: **935 (98.52%)**

Do you currently use wraparound childcare? Wraparound care is childcare before and after the school day, such as breakfast clubs and regular after-school provision that runs until 6pm or later.

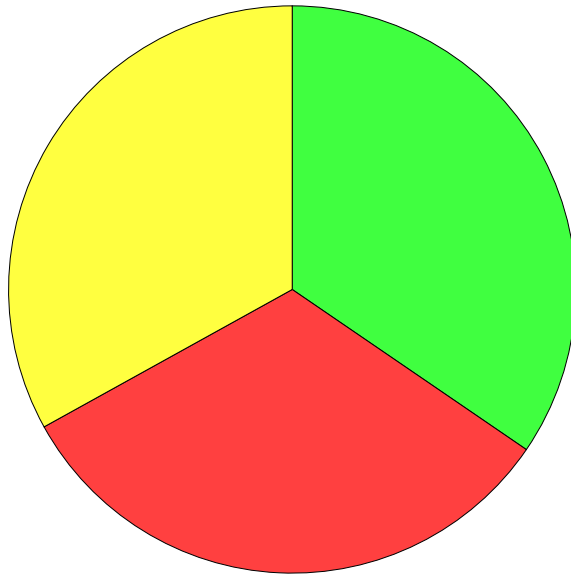


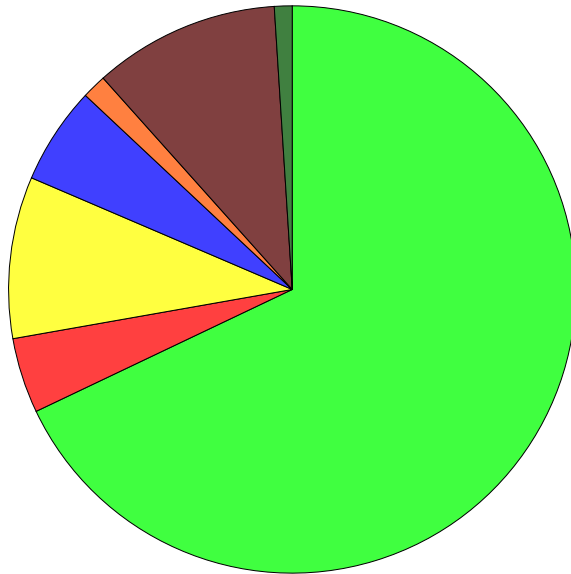
Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ All of the time (go to Q9)	34.04%	34.55%	323
■ Some of the time (go to Q13)	31.93%	32.41%	303
■ Not at all (go to Q13)	32.56%	33.05%	309
■ [No Response]	1.48%	--	14
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Question responses: **555 (58.48%)**

Why do you use, or want to use, wraparound childcare provision? Please tick any reasons why you chose your current childcare, or why you are looking for childcare



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
So I can go to work	45.36%	67.93%	56.69%	538
So I can study	2.87%	4.29%	3.58%	34
So my child can enjoy playing with other children	6.16%	9.22%	7.69%	73
To help my child's education	3.71%	5.56%	4.64%	44
Because the activity provides my child with a meal	0.93%	1.39%	1.16%	11
To top up childcare provided by friends or family	7.08%	10.61%	8.85%	84
Other	0.67%	1.01%	0.84%	8
[No Response]	33.22%	--	41.52%	394
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	1,186

Table .2

Table .1

Q10

Question responses: **571 (60.17%)**

When thinking about future childcare provision, if you need it, where would you prefer it to be?

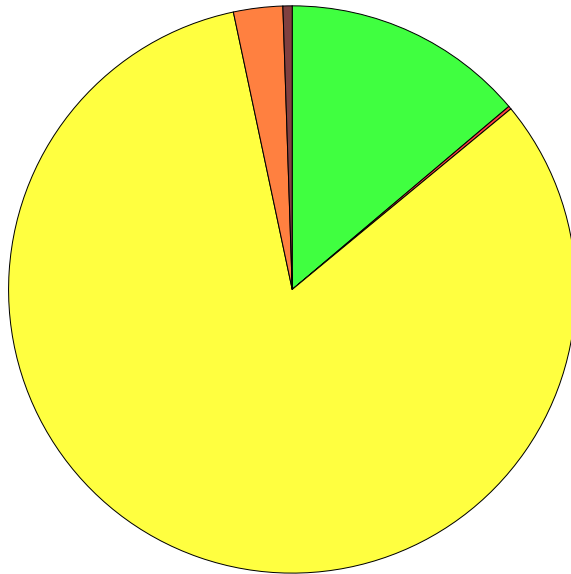


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Close to my home	8.32%	13.84%	79
■ Close to my work	0.11%	0.18%	1
■ At or near my child's school	49.74%	82.66%	472
■ At a local community centre	0.00%	0.00%	0
■ No preference	1.69%	2.80%	16
■ Other	0.32%	0.53%	3
■ [No Response]	39.83%	--	378
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q11

Q11

Question responses: **577 (60.80%)**

Do you use or need childcare during school holidays? Please select the option that best describes your situation.



Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ No, we don't need holiday provision	15.28%	25.13%	145
■ We already use childcare during school holidays	15.49%	25.48%	147
■ We need holiday provision but have not been able to find enough affordable or suitable options	27.29%	44.89%	259
■ Not sure	2.74%	4.51%	26
■ [No Response]	39.20%	--	372
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q12

Question responses: **218 (22.97%)**

Please give us any other comments you have about wraparound childcare in your area and then move to Q19

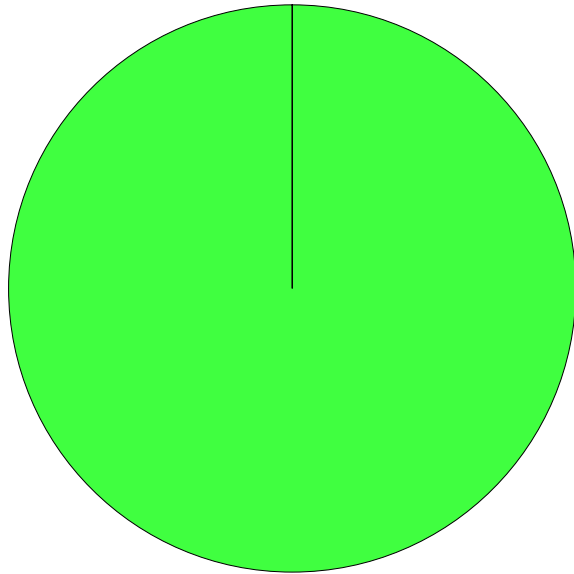


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	22.97%	100.00%	218
■ [No Response]	77.03%	--	731
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

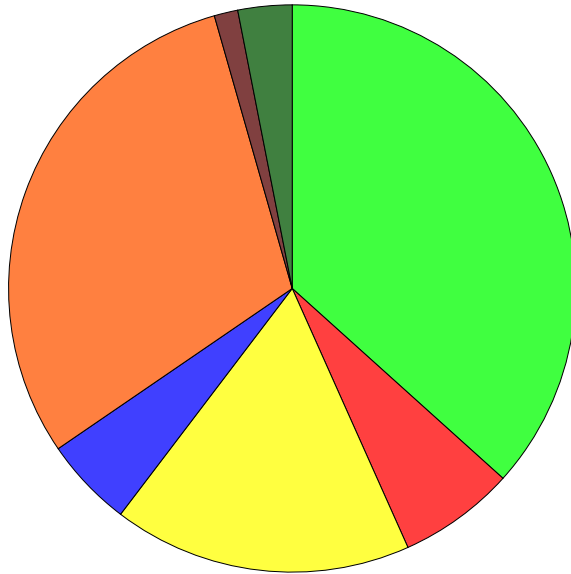
Table .2

Q13

Q13

Question responses: **711 (74.92%)**

Why do you not use wraparound childcare, or only use childcare for some of the time? Please tick any reasons that explain why you do not currently use wraparound childcare, or that reduce the amount of childcare you use.



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
■ Too expensive	29.84%	36.67%	40.15%	381
■ Not good enough quality, or worth the cost	5.40%	6.64%	7.27%	69
■ Not available where I need it	13.86%	17.04%	18.65%	177
■ My child doesn't want to go	4.15%	5.10%	5.58%	53
■ I have friends or family members who can help	24.51%	30.13%	32.98%	313
■ It has been unreliable in the past	1.10%	1.35%	1.48%	14
■ Suitable support for my child's additional needs its not available	2.51%	3.08%	3.37%	32
■ [No Response]	18.64%	--	25.08%	238

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	1,277

Table .2

Table .1

Q14

Q14

Question responses: **821 (86.51%)**

Are you likely to start using wraparound childcare, or to increase your current use, in future? For example, as your children get older or if you change your job. Please answer "Yes" if you are already planning to increase your use of wraparound childcare, for example to take on more working hours.

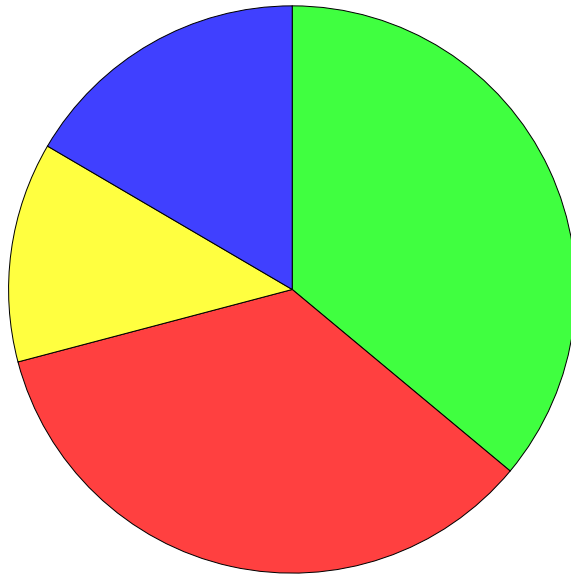


Table .1

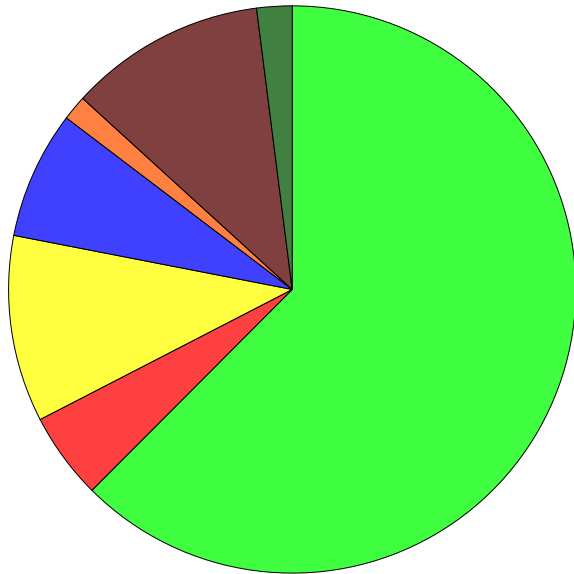
	% Total	% Answer	Count
Yes	31.19%	36.05%	296
Yes, but only if new or better options are available	30.14%	34.84%	286
No	10.85%	12.55%	103
Not sure	14.33%	16.57%	136
[No Response]	13.49%	--	128
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q15

Question responses: **797 (83.98%)**

Why do you use, or want to use, wraparound childcare provision? Please tick any reasons why you chose your current childcare, or why you are looking for childcare



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
■ So I can go to work	55.42%	62.48%	78.61%	746
■ So I can study	4.38%	4.94%	6.22%	59
■ So my child can enjoy playing with other children	9.44%	10.64%	13.38%	127
■ To help my child's education	6.46%	7.29%	9.17%	87
■ Because the activity provides my child with a meal	1.26%	1.42%	1.79%	17
■ To top up childcare provided by friends or family	9.96%	11.22%	14.12%	134
■ Other	1.78%	2.01%	2.53%	24
■ [No Response]	11.29%	--	16.02%	152
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	1,346

Table .2

Table .1

Q16

Q16

Question responses: **821 (86.51%)**

When thinking about future childcare provision, if you need it, where would you prefer it to be?

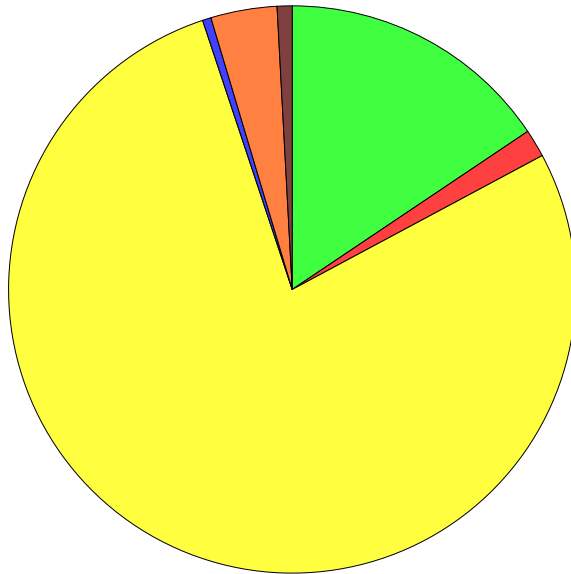


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Close to my home	13.49%	15.59%	128
Close to my work	1.37%	1.58%	13
At or near my child's school	67.23%	77.71%	638
At a local community centre	0.42%	0.49%	4
No preference	3.27%	3.78%	31
Other	0.74%	0.85%	7
[No Response]	13.49%	--	128
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q17

Question responses: **819 (86.30%)**

Do you use or need childcare during school holidays? Please select the option that best describes your situation.



Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ No, we don't need holiday provision	27.61%	31.99%	262
■ We already use childcare during school holidays	15.07%	17.46%	143
■ We need holiday provision but have not been able to find enough affordable or suitable options	37.09%	42.98%	352
■ Not sure	6.53%	7.57%	62
■ [No Response]	13.70%	--	130
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q18

Q18

Question responses: **161 (16.97%)**

Please give us any other comments you have about wraparound childcare in your area.

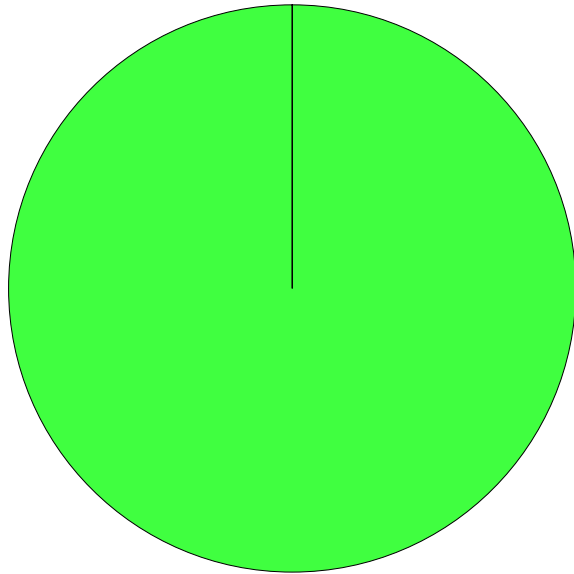


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	16.97%	100.00%	161
■ [No Response]	83.03%	--	788
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q19

Question responses: **906 (95.47%)**

Do you have any primary school age children with additional needs? By "additional needs" we mean any special educational needs or disabilities that have been identified, or any health or medical needs that may require additional support.

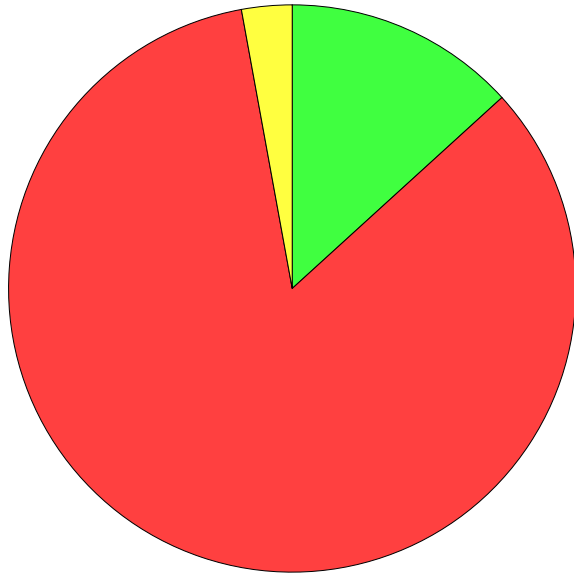


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ Yes (go to Q20)	12.64%	13.25%	120
■ No (go to Q21)	80.08%	83.89%	760
■ Not sure (go to Q21)	2.74%	2.87%	26
■ [No Response]	4.53%	--	43
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q20

Q20

Question responses: 174 (18.34%)

Do you currently use wraparound childcare for your children with additional needs? Wraparound care is childcare before and after the school day, such as breakfast clubs and regular after-school provision that runs until 6pm or later.

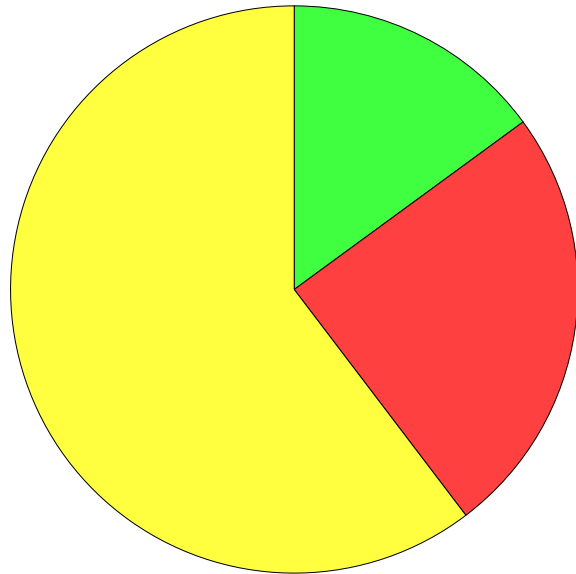


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ All of the time (go to Q21)	2.74%	14.94%	26
■ Some of the time (go to Q22)	4.53%	24.71%	43
■ Not at all (go to Q22)	11.06%	60.34%	105
■ [No Response]	81.66%	--	775
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q21

Question responses: **76 (8.01%)**

Please give us any comments you have about wraparound childcare for children with additional needs and then move to Q25.

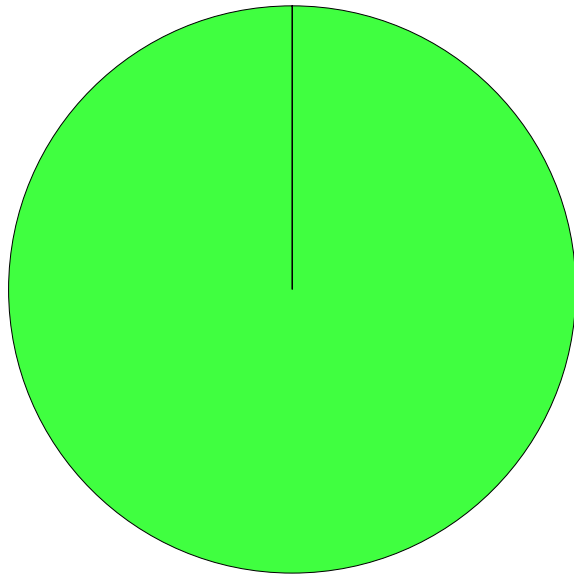


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	8.01%	100.00%	76
■ [No Response]	91.99%	--	873
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

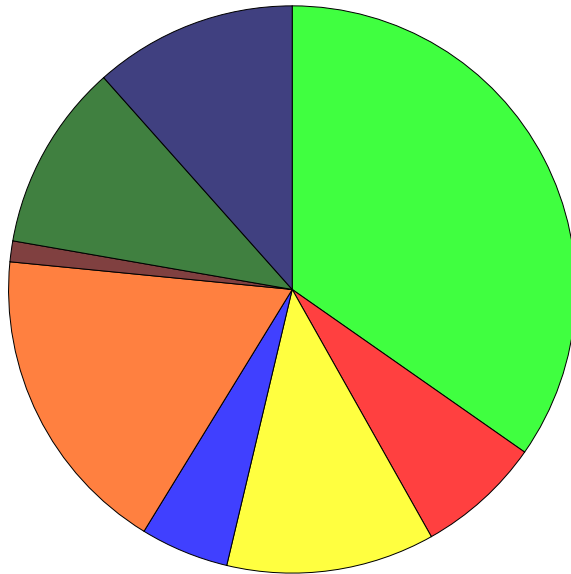
Table .2

Q22

Q22

Question responses: **248 (26.13%)**

Why do you not use wraparound childcare, or only use childcare for some of the time for your children with additional needs? Please tick any reasons that explain why you do not currently use wraparound childcare, or that reduce the amount of childcare you use.



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
■ Too expensive	11.27%	34.72%	12.33%	117
■ Not good enough quality, or worth the cost	2.31%	7.12%	2.53%	24
■ Not available where I need it	3.85%	11.87%	4.21%	40
■ My child doesn't want to go	1.64%	5.04%	1.79%	17
■ I have friends or family members who can help	5.78%	17.80%	6.32%	60
■ It has been unreliable in the past	0.39%	1.19%	0.42%	4
■ Suitable support for their additional needs is not available	3.47%	10.68%	3.79%	36
■ Other	3.76%	11.57%	4.11%	39
■ [No Response]	67.53%	--	73.87%	701

	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	1,038

Table .2**Table .1**

Q23

Q23

Question responses: **258 (27.19%)**

Are you likely to start using wraparound childcare, or to increase your current use, for your children with additional needs in future? Please answer "Yes" if you are already planning to increase your use of wraparound childcare, for example to take on more working hours.

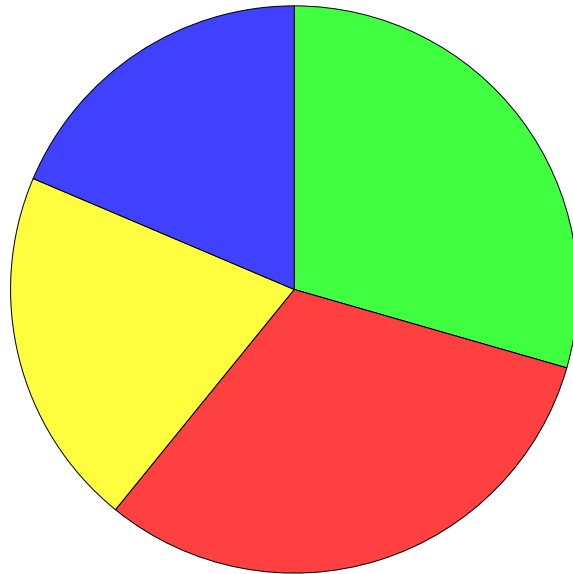


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
Yes	8.01%	29.46%	76
Yes, but only if new or better options are available	8.54%	31.40%	81
No	5.58%	20.54%	53
Not sure	5.06%	18.60%	48
[No Response]	72.81%	--	691
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

Q24

Question responses: **31 (3.27%)**

Please give us any comments you have about wraparound childcare for children with additional needs

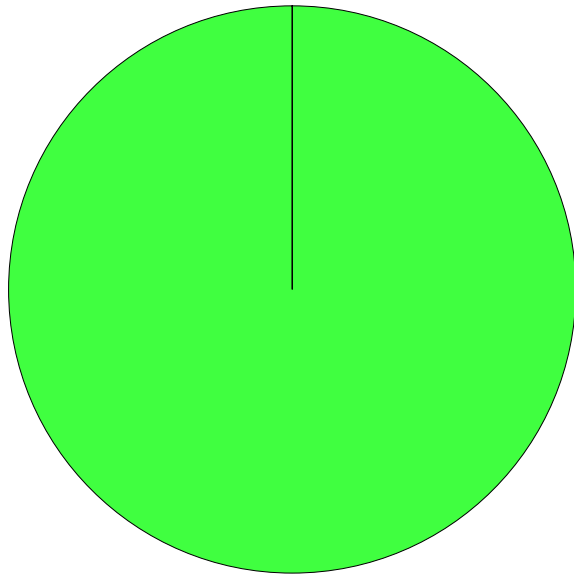


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	3.27%	100.00%	31
■ [No Response]	96.73%	--	918
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

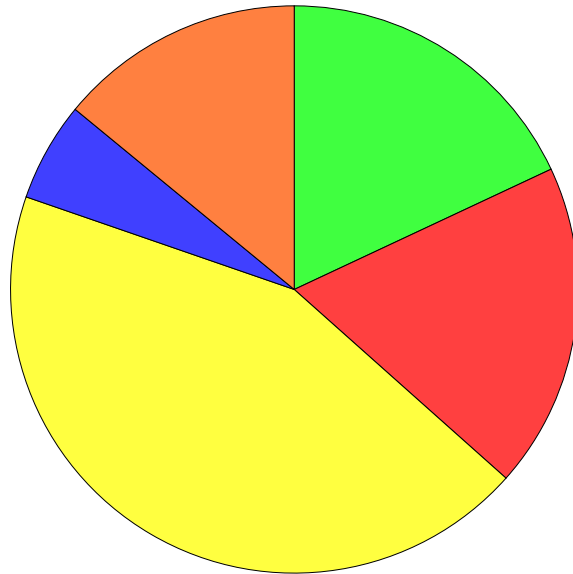
Table .2

Q25

Q25

Question responses: **907 (95.57%)**

Please choose which option best describes your awareness and use of Tax-Free Childcare.



	% Total	% Answer	Frequency	Count
■ I did not know about Tax-Free childcare	17.27%	18.03%	18.12%	172
■ I have heard of Tax-free childcare but am currently not eligible	17.77%	18.55%	18.65%	177
■ I have used a Tax-Free Childcare account in the past or currently	41.87%	43.71%	43.94%	417
■ I have heard of Tax-Free Childcare but am not interested	5.42%	5.66%	5.69%	54
■ I will consider using Tax-Free Childcare in the future	13.45%	14.05%	14.12%	134
■ [No Response]	4.22%	--	4.43%	42
Total	100.00%	100.00%	0%	996

Table .2

Table .1

Q26

Question responses: **274 (28.87%)**

How could we best provide information to you, or other families like yours, about relevant childcare entitlements or options for provision? Please tell us any suggestions you have for where we might let people know about things like Tax-Free Childcare, or how we could improve any of our current information services.

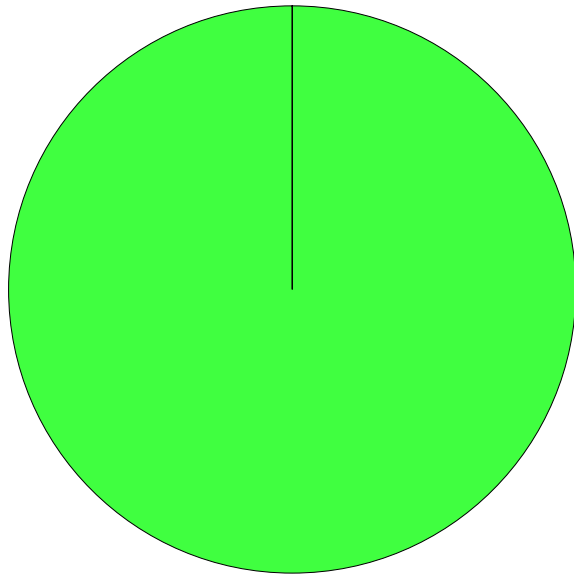


Table .1

	% Total	% Answer	Count
■ [Responses]	28.87%	100.00%	274
■ [No Response]	71.13%	--	675
Total	100.00%	100.00%	949

Table .2

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CABINET INFORMATION ITEM ONLY

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 October 2024

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR
OF ADULTS, HEALTH
and WELLBEING**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Adults, Health and Wellbeing - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Pauline Beall

Peer Assurance Challenge OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) AND CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) ASSURANCE UPDATE

Summary

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Council) commissioned an independent peer assurance challenge by the LGA to assess the ability of the adult social care service to deliver good care and support to people, as well as preparedness for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. On 23rd September, we received formal notification of the CQC onsite assessment, which will take place in the week commencing 25th November for 3-4 days.

The LGA assurance peer challenge completed in July 2024, mirrored the CQC assurance methodology and, whilst it did not provide a rating as we will receive from CQC, it did provide feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

Overall, the LGA assurance peer challenge feedback was very positive and identified some strong practice, a supportive and committed workforce and effective leadership and partnership arrangements. It also identified scope for developing our emerging approaches for co-production, recording and record-keeping and to support evidencing of strengths-based working.

The current action plan (developed in November 2023) has been updated to reflect this feedback and will guide the service to make further improvements in its planning and delivery of care and support to the people of Stockton-on-Tees.

Recommended that the report be noted and agree with the recommendations and actions as defined by the Local Government Association.

Detail

1. In October 2023, through North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Care (NE ADASS), the Council undertook a review of Adult Social Care. A peer challenge was completed by Dr. Carol Tozer, a former DASS who was commissioned to provide feedback on the position of Councils in the North East against the new CQC assurance framework¹.
2. The feedback from this assessment helped define the assurance action plan which we have used to implement improvements to the service and how we work with partners and people who access our services. The decision was taken to have a follow-up assessment in Summer 2024 and the LGA were commissioned to deliver this based on the CQC assurance framework assessment methodology.
3. The LGA assurance challenge process itself consisted of several stages (consistent with the CQC process):
 - i. **Submission of a Local Authority Information Return (LAIR)** in advance of the on-site visit, comprehensively covering performance information, key documents and a self-assessment.
 - ii. **An audit of six case files** completed by the Principal Social Worker in the LGA Team, with follow-up conversations with several of the people whose cases they reviewed.
 - iii. **An on-site assessment** by the full LGA team, involving individual and group interviews and site visits. This involved the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, leaders and staff from the Council, members of the Making it Real Board, partners in the NHS, and stakeholders including commissioned services and people from the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.
4. The **report attached at Appendix 1** summarises the results and findings of that peer assurance challenge. The key findings from the peer assurance challenge include:
 - i. Strong and visible leadership noting how 'Powering Our Future' is setting a strong strategic vision for the area
 - ii. A skilled and engaged workforce with a clear Focus on staff development enabling progression
 - iii. Evidence of good working relationships across the system to enable good outcomes for people
 - iv. Positive steps to embed co-production, noting the progress in developing the "Making it Real" Board.
 - v. A trusted and effective safeguarding partnership working across SBC and the wider system.
5. The peer assurance challenge team also identified opportunities for the Council to develop current arrangements and build on good practice. Specific areas identified were:

¹ The Health and Care Act 2022 puts the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) assurance of local authorities on a statutory footing. The new duty on the CQC to assess local authorities' delivery of their adult social care (ASC) duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 came into effect on 1 April 2023. Details of the framework is available at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-regulation/local-authorities/assessment-framework> .

- i. Some processes and pathways result in people having to tell their story more than once and the front door to Adult Social Care has multiple hand-off points.
 - ii. Opportunities for improved integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.
 - iii. Strategic leadership across the area of transitions from children's to adult services needs strengthening, including a stronger forecast of the financial implications.
 - iv. There is a need to improve the housing offer and more long-term planning, based on population need.
 - v. Planning for workforce sustainability due to the high number of long-service employees and competition in the locality for some work (i.e. care staff).
 - vi. All of these recommendations have work underway to ensure a positive outcome to the inspection.
6. The following preparation work is underway for CQC Assurance:
- i. A CQC Action Planning Steering Group was formed in October 2023 following the September 2023 peer challenge. The Steering Group meetings have now increased to take place twice-monthly, with additional meetings as required in preparation for the CQC assessment visit to provide assurance oversight and to monitor progress against the action plan. Weekly progress update and planning meetings are also taking place.
 - ii. A separate CQC inspection action plan to prepare for the on-site visit has been developed and is being implemented following receipt of the notification letter. A small working group is progressing this action plan, with oversight from the Steering Group.
 - iii. The list of 50 anonymised cases is being reviewed and case file summaries are being completed. The initial list was requested with the notification letter and is required to be submitted to the CQC by 7th October 2024. A definitive list of ten cases and summaries will then be requested by the CQC for case-tracking, with submission required within two weeks of that request.
 - iv. The LAIR data and Self-Assessment are under regular review to ensure that these remain current. The Self-Assessment has been shared widely with staff, partners and colleagues and opportunities identified to provide updates and seek feedback and input to inform future iterations. Key performance data is being reviewed and monitored through the monthly Liquid Logic Adults System Strategic Group.
 - v. A communication plan has been agreed with the Communications team. This includes the key messaging for all stakeholders and specific support for staff which is being developed and progressed with Quality Assurance and Workforce Development colleagues, with sessions to commence from October 2024.

Consultation and Engagement

7. The Communications Plan sets out in detail the key messaging and communication methods for all stakeholders. Regular engagement with partners is underway through existing meetings/forums. Our self-assessment has been shared with our staff,

partners and stakeholders. A plan is in place to attend key meetings and events to present and discuss this, to seek feedback and input and to shape the next iteration of the self-assessment.

Next Steps

8. The action plans will be progressed and updates will be provided accordingly.

Name of Contact Officer: Rob Papworth

Post Title: Strategic Development Manager, Adults Health & Wellbeing

Telephone No. 01642 528441

Email Address: rob.papworth@stockton.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1



Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge Report

Stockton on Tees Borough Council

August 2024

Final Report



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Background

Stockton on Tees Borough Council asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake an Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge at the Council, and with partners.

Carolyn Nice – Director for Adult Social Services commissioned an independent peer review to assess the ability of the adult social care service to deliver good services to people, as well as preparedness of the adult social service for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. The focus was on an independent perspective on how prepared adult social services are for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection and how well the organisation is delivering adult social care services for its residents.

The purpose of a peer challenge is to help an authority and its partners assess current achievements, areas for development, and capacity to change. Peer challenges are improvement focused and are not an inspection.

The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government and adult social care (ASC) to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, and material that they read.

Prior to being onsite the LGA Peer Challenge team undertook a case file audit, lived experience interviews, a review of data, and held 1-1 calls with people with lived experience of the services provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council Adult Social Care. The peer team were then onsite for three days holding interviews, focus groups, and discussions to fully understand the adult social care department to develop feedback and recommendations through triangulating the evidence presented.

All information collected was non-attributable to promote an open and honest dialogue.

The members of the peer challenge team were:

- **Stephanie Butterworth** – Director Adult Social Services, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Jon Goodwin** – Peer Challenge Manager, LGA and Interim Assistant Director, Kent County Council
- **Councillor Joanne Harding** – Lead Member for Finance, Change and Governance, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Nick Pryke** – Deputy Director of Community Health and Adult Social Care Operations, Norfolk County Council
- **Alexandra Pitcher** – Assurance and Workforce Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council
- **John Allen** – Principal Social Worker, North East Lincolnshire Council
- **Russell Henderson** – Strategy and Transformation Commissioning Lead, Kingston upon Thames London Borough Council.

The team were on-site at Stockton on Tees Borough Council for three days from 9th July 2024. In arriving at their findings, the peer team:

- Held 36 interviews and discussions with over 150 different people including Councillors, officers, senior leaders, partners, people with lived experience, and carers.
- Read a range of relevant documents provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council, including a self-assessment.
- Completed 8 case file audits with 22 conversations with people with lived experience.
- Had a combined social care experience amounting to over 216 years.

The peer challenge team spent approximately 184 hours with Stockton on Tees Borough Council; the equivalent of 24.5 working days. Invariably, this is still a snapshot of the organisation rather than being totally comprehensive.

Specifically, the peer team's work focused on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) framework four assurance themes for the up-coming adult social care assurance process. They are:

Care Quality Commission Assurance themes

<p>Theme 1: Working with people. This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing Need Supporting People to Live Healthier Lives Equity in Experiences and Outcomes 	<p>Theme 2: Providing support. This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Provision, Integration, and Continuity Partnerships and Communities
<p>Theme 3: How the local authority ensures safety within the system. This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe Pathways, Systems, and Transitions Safeguarding 	<p>Theme 4: Leadership. This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance, Management, and Sustainability Learning Improvement and Innovation

The peer challenge team would like to thank Councillors, staff, people with a lived experience, carers, partners, and providers for their open and constructive responses during the challenge process. All information was collected on a non-attributable basis.

Initial feedback was presented to the Council on the last day of the peer challenge and gave an overview of the key messages. This report builds on the presentation and gives a more detailed account of the findings of the peer team.

Key Messages – Strengths

There are observations and suggestions within the main section of the report linked to each of the CQC themes and quality statements. The following are the peer team's key summary highlights:

- Dedicated workforce supported by strong and visible leadership “*I work for the best Teesside Council*”.
- Continuing theme of very positive and engaged wider workforce – a credit to Stockton on Tees!
- The philosophy of advocacy and person-centred working is strong across the organisation and with external partners.
- Efforts to include the voice of people are underway with the Making it Real board.
- Making safeguarding personal is evidenced at all stages with high numbers of people reporting feeling safe (ASCOF).

•

Key Messages – Areas for Consideration

- People state having to tell their story more than once and the front door having multiple hand off points, which is a frustration and limits the person's sense of being listened to.
- Improve integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.
- Strategic leadership across the area of transitions needs strengthening, including stronger forecast of the financial implications.
- Planning for workforce sustainability – lots of long service employees and competition in the locality for some work (care staff).
- Develop a single story from the data - be clear about “unmonitored waiting times”.

Case File Audit

As part of the Peer Challenge, a case file audit was carried out on 8 cases. Of the 8 cases, the Peer Team were able to speak to 22 people in receipt of the service (or their family/advocate) to understand their lived experience.

Strengths

- Strong person-centred narrative & recording.
- The voice of the person and the carer was apparent throughout.
- Good evidence of professionalism and values through the case record.
- Rights-based practice is consistent.
- Documentation of person's needs written with clarity and sensitivity, clearly capturing care and support needs using their words.
- Sound evidence of working with the persons wishes, feelings and what's important to them.
- Care Act eligibility and decision making is clearly documented with the person at the centre.
- Good evidence of the recording of multi-disciplinary working and decision making within assessments and case notes.
- Consistent joined up work with Social Workers and Occupational Therapist with good synergy to the assessment work.
- Financial discussions, in respect of potential charging, are clearly evident in every assessment.
- Key principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 identified within assessments and best interest decision making recordings.
- CHC considerations are timely and consistent.

Considerations

- Evidence of strengths-based practice is limited throughout. A strong use of statutory services, but with limited reference to the individual strengths or VCSE/ community / network support. Recording is sometimes deficit focused.
- There is good engagement with carers, but a limited reference to offer of carers assessment or other carers support services. Often carers are not recorded formally, despite being evident in notes.
- MCA recording could be clearer to show practitioner thinking and how decisions have been arrived at.
- Forms and recording templates could better give space for personalised recording to capture the voice of the person and enhance the evidence of professional decision making. Changes here could support a more strengths-based practice approach.

Lived Experience Feedback

Strengths

- People said they had confidence in support from social workers and therapy services and felt listened to.
- Staff were described as supportive, understanding and wanted to work together with people and carers.
- Once working with the team, people felt they could pick up the phone and get support when they needed it.

Considerations

- People described finding information to start with about who to contact and how, quite difficult.
- People described a lack of 'joined up' working between health services, and that they weren't advised of the support available from adult social care by health services.
- People stated that there were some long waits at the beginning of requesting support, with little information about time scales or what would happen next.

Theme 1: Working with People

This relates to assessing needs, planning and reviewing care, arrangements for direct payments and charging, supporting people to live healthier lives, prevention, wellbeing, information and advice, understanding and removing inequalities in care and support, and people's experiences and outcomes from care.

CQC Quality Statement 1 – Assessing Needs

Strengths

- The philosophy of advocacy and person-centred working is strong across the organisation and with external partners.
- The Making it Real board is increasing the voice, and valuing the expertise, of experts by experience in the organisation.
- Where people are waiting for assessment, there is good understanding of risk and some understanding of 'waiting well'.
- Staff value the visibility of the Principal Social Worker in the system and the provision of reflective learning practice sessions.
- Carers support service has good uptake and provides meaningful, person centred intervention for carers that they have a voice in.

Considerations

- People state having to tell their story multiple times, and the front door having multiple hand off points is a frustration and limits their sense of being listened to.
- A consistent approach is needed around rights-based practice and legal literacy across the workforce to ensure parity for people and their outcomes.
- Having a consistent approach to waiting well will help to reduce frustrations and keep people informed.
- Stronger development and embedding the practice approach is needed to fully realise strengths-based practice and 'bring to life' the ambitions of the

practice framework.

- Inconsistency of approach, availability and inequity in the care market limits the choice and control for people.
- The Making it Real board provides a solid foundation to move co-production from the table to the real world. The organisation needs to ensure all of this great work is embedded.

Quality Statement One: Assessing needs.

Assessment, Care Planning and Review Arrangements

It is clear from what was observed, read and heard by the Peer Team, that there is a strong and well understood strategic framework that underpins all the key areas of work across the Council. The *'Powering Our Future Programme'* is based around five key missions: Colleagues, Communities, Partnerships, Transformation and Regeneration. Since July 2023, there has been refined focus on the programme to ensure it addresses the financial challenges and opportunities, as a Borough, whilst improving outcomes for communities, including *'opportunities to build brighter futures for the communities of Stockton on Tees and reduce inequality'*. In addition to this, an acknowledgment of *'carefully managing the council's resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by customers.'*

The Adult Social Care Strategy 2021 -2025 identifies 4 key priorities:

1. *To provide support to people prevent, reduce, or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.*
2. *To ensure people can get the right level and type of support at the right time.*
3. *To develop and support our staff and to support providers of social care services to develop and support their staff.*
4. *To work with and within communities.*

The peer team observed that these priorities were '*present and understood*' in the staff we met across the service at most levels. Staff talked passionately about the need for timeliness and responsiveness in their approaches and expressed a high level of pride in working for the Council in Stockton on Tees. There was a tangible sense of a '*Team Stockton*' philosophy and value base that was demonstrated by statements, "*I'm proud of the difference we make!*" and "*the services here would be definitely good for my family when or if the time comes*". Staff talked openly about their pride in being able to promote independence with a focus on reducing traditional forms of care and support. Recorded information within the case files observed a strong sense of the person and what was important to them. There were high levels of sensitivity and empathy demonstrated throughout with some excellent narrative clearly capturing care and support needs using the person's words as strong references to what mattered to them at the time.

There was also a good understanding of the Care Act (2014) and in particular the 'Wellbeing' principle. A clear understanding of rights-based practice was observed across all files seen of the legal framework of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and how 'best interest' decision making is being taken. It should also be noted that both within case file recording observed and in discussions with the teams, staff spoke passionately about the advantages of multi-disciplinary working and close working relationships both within and across other organisations in finding good outcomes for the public.

Staff interviewed were keen to tell us how their legal literacy underpinned the work they were carrying out with the public, in terms of rights based social care, and using these frameworks to support people with choice and control, which included keeping

people safe. This was triangulated from the case audits carried out, that showed understanding of legally defensible decision making and upholding people's rights, particularly from the mental capacity assessments and best interest records seen. However, the peer team felt that mental capacity recording could be clearer to show practitioner thinking and how decisions have been arrived at.

Advocacy and the voice of the resident

Stockton on Tees Council commission People First as its Advocacy Provider with the majority of referrals to this service (470 in 2023/24) for Relevant Person's Representative in relation to deprivation of liberty. The peer team observed both from the case file audit and talking to experts by experience that the voice of the person and the carer was apparent throughout and there was sound evidence of working with the persons wishes, feelings and what's important to them. Our meetings with Safeguarding Practitioners, Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors was made clear to us that the role of independent advocacy, as outlined in legislation (IMCA's, IMHA's etc) was central to practice and 'business as usual'. This professional group sited good availability of Advocates in the system and a clear promotion of the role of advocacy. In addition to this the peer team observed and heard clear evidence of advocacy within the day service visit. The voice of the service user was evident in the range of sessions/activities that are organised, with regular newsletters stating what service users felt about attending the service.

The Peer Team also observed strong advocacy principles in the meetings with housing colleagues. Messages came across as "*never giving up*" on people despite struggling to maintain accommodation options or failing accommodation attempts.

The Council was described by advocacy providers and partners as "*forward thinking*", "*want to do well*" and "*really interested compared to other local authorities*". Advocacy is seen as part of the solution. They cited good relationships between the advocacy agency and the council and that there was good professional dialogue. However, the Peer Team did hear that there was felt to be a disconnect between advocacy providers and the Making it Real board. They had not been invited to be part of the board and felt they could make a positive contribution. Finally, the peer

team were also impressed by the new Care Act pilot and the restructured Care Act assessment form. The use of “I” statements and placing the service user voice at the centre of the assessment process is a strong indication of Stockton On Tees Borough Council’s commitment to ensure advocacy is strong here.

Timeliness of assessments, care planning & reviews

The latest performance information was provided on day one for the peer view visit, and it was clear from the information provided that overall waiting times for assessment were very low across all of the services within Adult Social Care. (90.6% of assessments are completed within 28 days). The largest delays were within the ‘front door’ service with 42 people waiting for transfer to other teams and 26 people waiting for Mental Health services. All of these delays were within a 28-day timescale and staff were able to demonstrate their approach to managing risk using a RAG based risk system of contacting every resident each week to establish if circumstances have changed. There was a good approach to ‘*waiting well*’ principles, but the Peer Team felt that further understanding of this would enhance the outcomes for residents, particularly within the weekly contact checks made to people.

Most impressively were the very short timescales for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards with all formal applications and authorisations completed within statutory timescales and the organisation performing in the top quartile 25% nationally. (11 days compared to the average of 156 days across the country). In addition, minor aids and adaptations in the home, such as stair lifts, shower pods and ramps operate to timescales within ten weeks from point of contact to installation, demonstrating a real tangible positive impact on people’s promotion of their independence and least use of more traditional forms of care and support.

Care and Support Pathways

The peer team were able to interview staff from safeguarding teams, locality teams, learning disabilities teams, hospital teams, Multi-disciplinary Service, Reablement, transitions and Community Occupational Therapists, and felt there are impressive integrated pathways out of hospital which achieve good outcomes for people resulting in few delays.

The peer team did observe that there were numerous small teams under the banner of Early Intervention and Prevention services and felt that there were areas of crossover and some duplication of task and function. This was particularly observed in talking to staff who were often describing very similar functions of early intervention and reablement. In talking with users of the service, it was clear that people described a difficulty in finding information about Adult Social Care in the first instance and then upon making contact with the service having to tell their story multiple times with a number of hand-off points cited as a frustration and limiting their sense of being listened to.

Redeveloping the Early Intervention and Prevention element of the service should be seen as a priority in order to promote the vision and principles of the council and the Adult Social Care Strategy key principles.

The peer team did identify some delays for transfers of care from within the in-house reablement team for people who had received support and who were waiting for care and support to commence at their home. Some of these delays were reported to be as high as 6 weeks beyond the support and therefore the peer team are of the opinion that it is very important that senior leadership and managers are totally clear of all delays in the system and can articulate this well within the self-assessment.

Quality Assurance

The peer team observed a well-established role and function of the Principal Social Worker (PSW). The post holder demonstrated a passion for good quality person-centred care and support and staff described how they valued the visibility and strong day-to-day connections that was available to them as practitioners and managers. The PSW has been a key facilitator for co-producing the Adult Social Care Workforce Development Plan 2024-26, which staff referred to and talked about and also how they valued the PSW taking time to meet all new starters, having a strong focus on their continuing professional development.

There is strong focus on quality with the newly developed Adult Social Care Practice Framework, which is a good start, but the peer team felt there was limited evidence of strengths-based practice throughout case recording with some of the case file recording observed as deficit focused. Whilst there was a strong use of statutory services, there was limited reference to the individual strengths or the Voluntary

Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) / community / network support.

The peer team would recommend that the ambitions of the Practice Framework need to set out a much more clearly defined set of principles of strengths-based working and how this is nuanced and different from 'person-centred' support. Referencing the work of 'Think Local Act Personal' (TLAP) and Making it Real 'I' and 'We' statements will bring about specific principles that should underpin and help to benchmark practice, along with examples of what good looks like and how this is seen in practice. This should be followed with some clearer defined strengths-based practice development opportunities that encapsulate the true definition of strengths-based practice and support staff in understanding the difference.

It was noted by the peer team that the joint reflective peer practice forums have been well received by staff across the organisation. Staff and other key stakeholders have equally been very complimentary about the internal quality assurance processes by the PSW and Lead Occupational Therapist (LOT)), and staff interviewed were very positive about learning and development opportunities across the workforce.

A Quality and Workforce Development team were set up in 2023 focusing on training compliance and needs and to ensure mandatory compliance is met for staff in key areas of knowledge such as Safeguarding and legal literacy.

Workforce of Adult Social Care

The workforce of operational adult social care is delivered across 21 teams, offering a range of support and specialist intervention, including community-based day options and a dedicated short breaks service for adults with an identified learning disability. This workforce totals approximately 482 staff including commissioners as well as managers and leaders, made up as 87.3% female and 12.6% male staff. The current workforce over 55 years old is 30% and under 25 years old is just 8%. Currently, vacancies are very low across all areas of the service.

Whilst the peer team could see the newly developed workforce strategy 2024–26, and could see the 'golden thread' of the vision of the council and its operational strategies, the team felt more is needed about the tangible actions that will support a 'shift' of the age profile of the workforce. "*Stockton is somewhere where we come and stay!*" was a typical level of narrative heard by the peer team in meeting many of the staff and this is seen by levels of long service for many. Whilst this is cause for

celebration and clear demonstration of the value that staff feel about working for the council, consideration should be given as to how new recruitment will be formed strategically via innovative approaches to recruitment and specific targeting of key positions that are often difficult to recruit to such as Occupational Therapists and Social Workers. Building an articulate career progression pathway in partnership with key stakeholders across the local NHS, Independent Care and Voluntary sector will support this.

Quality Statement Two: Supporting people to live healthier lives.

Wellbeing Principle

As read within the Self-Assessment, Stockton on Tees has one of the largest gaps in England for life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between the poorest and most affluent areas. It ranks 113 out of 317 local authorities in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The current Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023 is being refreshed and co-produced by partners and key stakeholders. Its key messages have a strong wellbeing principle throughout:

- *All children and families have the best start in life*
- *Everyone has a healthy standard of living*
- *Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities*
- *Everyone lives long and healthy lives*

The peer team observed strong messages of 'wellbeing' and the wellbeing principle within the council and adult social care, and it was clear from what was heard from most of the people met over the 3 days that the peer team were on site that the 'Wellbeing' principle and 'good health' is at the heart of what all practitioners are saying and carrying out in their daily practice, fundamentally demonstrating a real commitment to the principle of 'wellbeing as set out within the Care Act (2014).

Carers

As referenced within the Self-Assessment the Adult Carers Support Service was brought in-house in 2018 and supports adult carers (over 18) in Stockton on Tees

who care for another adult. At the point of this transfer there were 103 carers registered with the service. In 2024, this is now recorded at 2436 which is seen as an estimated support to 12% of the unpaid carer's population in the Borough. 100% of carers receiving a service have a direct payment compared to the England average of 76.8%. Whilst support can vary from advice, support and signposting, there are others who have a range of practical levels of support such as the 'Time Out' service which offers up to 8 hours of support per month free of charge for carers to have a break from their caring role. The peer team were very impressed by the range and quality of these services and agreed with a staff member of the carers team – *“what we do is real early intervention!”*.

Quality Statement Three: Equity in Experiences and Outcomes.

Diversity and Equity

The peer team felt that the messages and images contained with the Vision for Adult Social care were not reflective of the increasing diverse population of Stockton on Tees and the council's commitment to equality of experience not as explicit as it could have been. 'In 2021, 4.6% of Stockton on Tees residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 3.5% in 2011. The 1.1 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.' (ONS (2024)).

Staff talked very positively about *“we are all Stockton”*, and that equity for people across the community and providing services is *“good enough for my family”*. The sense of collaboration and working together was inclusive and felt genuine. There was no sense of oppressive practice in any of the conversations, but also, no anti-oppressive examples that came through in the discussions. Care and support providers did talk about the disparity for people with learning disabilities in access to equity in health care provision. Providers stated that there is inequality, but this picture is improving with support from the Council and in particular the commissioning team through work done by the Enhanced Health Care Team.

The training offer to providers from Stockton on Tees Borough Council has upskilled the care workforce to enable them to advocate better for the people they support, helping to remove some of the barriers to equality in health and care provision.

From a broader perspective, the Director of Public Health spoke about the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy and how multi-disadvantaged communities is a focus to ensure equity of experience and outcomes. In addition to this, The '*Coalition of the Willing*' group is chaired by Director of Adult Social Services and this is providing a clear governance for system partners to come together to tackle health inequalities, system challenges and continuous improvement across the local system, which strategically will underpin future actions.

Whilst the peer team are of the opinion that the ethos and principles of equality and diversity are embedded in the customs and practice, the peer team observed it is not easy to identify the '*golden thread*' through policy and practice, and this area therefore needs to be more explicit.

Co-Production and Engagement

The 'Making it Real' Board was established in January 2024 and the peer team consider this to be an exemplar of the best examples of co-production seen within a local authority. The peer team spent time with the 'Making it Real' board members and were impressed by the tangible difference the board is making in terms of an authentic forward-thinking foundation of co-production, rather than engagement.

The peer team heard of the excellent examples of involvement at many levels of the organisation in its design and shaping. We heard powerful messages that were impactful. '*really honest conversations*', "*citizens doing what citizens want to hear*", "*If co-production isn't messy, you're not doing it right!*".

It was felt widely across the Peer Team that this needs to continue to develop and should be more widely shared as a model of good practice for other local authorities to follow.

Theme 2: Providing Support

This relates to market shaping, commissioning, workforce capacity and capability, integration, and partnership working.

Strengths

- Evidence of data and research being used to inform strategic transformation. e.g. Improving quality in care homes.
- Efforts to include the voice of people are underway with the Making it Real board, examples of experts by experience being involved in commissioning new services including evaluating a tender for a day opportunity.
- There are a range of day opportunities services that enable people to live good lives at home e.g. (Wag and company) and the STEPS service connecting people to the VCSE.
- Investment in the provider workforce supports better outcomes for people.
- There is evidence of good working relationships across the system to enable good outcomes for people – e.g. Hospital discharge and the Integrated Single Point of Access (ISPA).
- Reablement outcomes are very good, with a high number of people not requiring a long-term package of care after six weeks.

Considerations

- Consideration of post hospital offer, intermediate care - is it reaching enough people, is the estate working?
- There needs to be a consistent approach to relationships with providers, including quality framework, future opportunities and some specific issues about payments.
- Increase focus on early intervention to prevent unnecessary admissions or interventions.
- There's a need to improve the housing offer and more long-term planning, based on population need.
- Improve integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.

Quality Statement Four: Care Provision, Integration, and Continuity

The peer team agreed with the findings of the Council's Self-Assessment with regards to commissioning activity and the 'golden thread' messages from '*Powering Our Future*' and supported from within the *Adult Strategy 2021-25*, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (due for publication August 2024) and the newly refreshed *Market Position Statement 2023-26*.

It is clear from the information the peer team read and then triangulated with what we observed and heard, that these strategies were formed from feedback with partners and key stakeholders. The level of care provider and stakeholder engagement was very impressive, with a number of engagement and collaborative developments, that have served to redesign and recommission some key contracts, as well as the development of Tees Complex Care and Support framework, and the formation of a leadership and peer support network, which is enabling the sharing of good practice, leadership development and partnership working across providers.

The Council spends £55.9m per annum on its commissioned Adult Social Care services (2021 data), including its in-house services. £32.5m of this is spent on the provision for residential/nursing care for all adults and older people, including those with a learning disability and mental health, with £14.1m being spent on care and support at home services.

The peer team heard that 70% of all mental health placements were made out of the area but could not see a clear plan or proposal to address this and stimulate local market development. The peer team wanted to understand and see evidence of market development either in the VCSE preventative space or in gaps like mental health supported living issues and could not see explicit information on any work that is able to project need into the future, alongside a sufficient understanding of gaps as part of a commissioning strategy. Whilst it is fully acknowledged and understood that developing a more aligned housing and support strategy as part of '*Powering Our Future*', we would recommend a much clearer acknowledgment of the issue within the Self-Assessment and a clear plan to be set out as part of this.

Understanding and management of the market and quality assurance

Stockton on Tees care and support provision has an above average percentage of care homes rated at 'Good' or 'Outstanding', with the England average being 75.7% and the council's overall regulated providers recorded at 77.8%. Split down, this identifies Care at Home services rated 84% at 'Good', with 3% 'Outstanding' and for Care Homes rated at 78% 'Good' with 6% 'Outstanding'. However, it was noted that whilst this is an overall higher than average rating for good or outstanding, there remains to be 16% of care homes with a rating of 'Requires Improvement' and 10% of care at home providers with a rating of 'Requires Improvement.'

Whilst acknowledging there are areas across the care market of excellent provider quality, the peer team felt the work with the provider assessment and market management solution (PAMMS) needed greater evidence of its impact as a quality framework, that would provide assurance as to the performance, legal compliance, risk and quality of providers. Some providers told us that they had not had a quality assurance visit, and that they felt strongly this would support them to be cognisant of their assurance and governance.

The peer team would therefore recommend being clearer as to how market quality and intelligence is being monitored and used across commissioning and in particular clear plans as to how the gap in quality will be reduced. This should also be reflected in the self-assessment.

In-house provider services

The following are regulated services and their most recent CQC inspection outcomes:

- Rosedale Centre – CQC Rating - Good
- Oak Road Residential Care Home – CQC Rating - Good
- Lanark Close Short Breaks Service – CQC Rating - Good
- Stockton-on-Tees Shared Lives Service – CQC Rating - Good
- One Call – CQC Rating - Good

The following are Non-Regulated Day Services:

- Halcyon Centre and Livewell Hub
- Allensway Day Options
- Community Day Options
- STEPS Community Bridge Building

The peer team were very impressed by the in-house quality of services to residents, and feedback from people with lived experience demonstrated the commitment of the Council to support good outcomes.

Making it Real and Engagement

As referenced in section 1, the role of the Making it Real board is really important for the Council's commissioning intentions. It is clear that this is an example of 'true co-production, rather than consultation or *'tokenistic engagement'*, where the voice of people with lived experience is at the heart of the design of services. Good examples were heard where experts by experience have taken part in the tendering process for a day opportunity (Ware Street Day Services.) In addition to this there were other examples observed where *'experts by experience'* have been involved in the organisation's planning and activity models and supported to shape the programme. The recent appointments of Lived Experience Co-ordinator and Assurance and Co-

Production Manager will continue to support innovation and strong involvement at all levels in the organisation and demonstrates Stockton-on-Tees' commitment in this in area to make a real difference.

Relationships with providers and support for them to provide continuity of care.

The peer team were very impressed by the relationships that have been built and created via the regular quarterly forums in place to ensure effective communication. *“Our shared values are ‘Respect, Responsibility and Excellence” - “All of this is down to the transformation team – they are really supportive”* Others equally cited the role of the transformation team – *“we are research led and research leading! We really are proud to be influencing strengths-based care and support. We would not be here had it not been for Stockton on Tees Borough Council – they have been real enablers and supported us in our ‘well led’ journey!”*

It was noted however, that whilst this level of excellent feedback was strong and came across particularly from many providers, some other providers felt that there was more the Council could do in terms of recognition of achieving an *‘outstanding’* inspection finding from the regulator. Many providers highlighted that connections across some of the locality operational services were not as strong and could be improved, with some sense of disconnection and having to ‘chase’ for urgent reviews. The peer team would recommend having some greater operational connection in to the provider forums which would create a stronger connection and support developing more planned review functions.

The peer team also noted that the implementation of ‘minute by minute’ billing had caused charging to vary for some users of the services, and providers were often left to try to support and explain to people, which was causing some frustration. This was revoked in August 2023 following engagement with providers.

Hospital Discharge

The Self-Assessment identifies Stockton on Tees improving performance for those people remaining at home 91 days following discharge from hospital or reablement

services. This is 94% and is higher than the England average at 82.4%, which is impressive.

Aligning funding from the Better Care Fund and Adult Social Care Discharge to Assess fund, is demonstrating some good outcomes to support hospital discharge and people remaining living at home in the community. The Integrated Single Point of Access was seen and observed as a well-functioning integrated space for staff to ensure the person is central to the assessment and plans of support around them. The team told us how they are *'proud that they hear the patient's voice through everything.'*

However, it was generally observed by the peer team that there could be a greater more defined *'Home First'* model that has a stronger focus on how services can be shaped to respond quickly to avoid hospital admission, coupled with clearer and more defined pathways of reablement support and clear step-down pathways to ensure people are not delayed waiting for commissioned care at home services to commence. Some staff cited delays as long as 17 weeks for care at home services to start, following reablement, in which delays in assessment were seen as a factor in this.

Staff also described how they were working with colleagues in the acute trust in very positive ways, but hugely aware that lack of integrated systems were a factor in sharing essential Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) information and how 'paper-based systems' hampered efficient information sharing. The peer team would highlight the importance of a refreshed model of Home First in order to fully support the key priority 1 and 2 of the Adult Social Care Strategy (provide support to prevent, reduce or delay the need for on-going support and maximise their independence and ensuring People can get the right level of support at the right time)

Quality Statement Five: Partnerships and Community

The peer team met colleagues from housing and could see a clear demonstration of the understanding of housing and adult social care legal frameworks and service criteria across these services. It was impressive to hear that staff were flexible in their application of service criteria and service boundaries in working together to

create good outcomes for residents who would be in danger of falling through the gaps in some service provision.

However, it was felt that some of the relationships on a strategic level remain immature and require further development and shaping and would benefit from a clear housing and social care strategy to ensure those people with complex mental health and learning disability could be provided with more flexible support closer to the borough.

Relationship with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

Continuing the strongly observed 'golden thread' of Stockton on Tees's strategic framework 'Powering Our Future' and in particular 'Partnerships', the Peer Team observed, heard and have read very strong messages about the importance of partnerships and working together in establishing good outcomes for its residents.

As seen in the Self-Assessment, there are a number of *'resilient and established partnerships to ensure a joined up and sustained approach to prevention'*,

Key services include:

- The Multidisciplinary Service
- Integrated Single Point of Access
- Intermediate Care, adaptations and equipment
- The Livewell Dementia Hub
- Learning Disability Day Services
- Social Lights
- Community Connect
- Community Spaces
- STEPS
- The Bread-and-Butter Thing

The peer team had contact with a number of these services and could see the real benefit and impact they are making in terms of prevention and were very impressed by the quality and breadth of support they were providing. Overall, there was

excellent feedback provided about relationships across the council, but some services wanted to hear more about opportunities to tender for specific services and felt '*left out*' of this.

The peer team would therefore recommend a greater level of connection across the VCSE group in particular around the area of 'prevention' and strengths-based practice, where many of these services can be leaders in this space.

Theme 3: Ensuring Safety

This area relates to Section 42 safeguarding enquiries, reviews, safe systems, and continuity of care.

Strengths

- Strong Stockton focus within TSAB, willingness to address complexity and to utilise feedback to improve.
- There is trusted and effective safeguarding partnership working across SBC and the wider system.
- A broad range of Safeguarding cross boundary training and best practice forums available for staff and providers.
- Making safeguarding personal is evidenced at all stages with high numbers of people reporting feeling safe (ASCOF)
- Strong safeguarding leadership and cross team support offer
- Robust 'checks and balances' ensuring social work and OT practice is person-centred and meets required professional standards

Considerations

- Duplicated effort in s42 enquiries can cause confusion of roles and responsibilities and challenges ability to make safeguarding personal.
- Front door is currently struggling to meet demand, truly connect people to a timely prevention offer and adds additional layers to the care journey.
- Transitions into adulthood needs to be defined, proactive and safe. Current pathway is creating "poor experiences and outcomes"

- Focus on waiting times within care pathways is needed.
- Develop a data set that enables managers and teams to drive continuous improvement and give assurance of safe systems.
- Take the opportunity to learn and improve from all sources of feedback i.e. informal complaints.

Quality Statement Six: Safe systems, Pathways, and Transitions

Teesside Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)

Members of the peer team met members of TSAB and a range of key leaders and stakeholders. It was clear from the open discussions that relationships are very established, and priorities are closely connected across both Community Safety and Safeguarding within the Stockton on Tees borough.

Stockton on Tees is one of four local authority members within the board, which is led by an independent chair. There are six statutory members and 23 non statutory members, continuing the strong theme of Stockton's 'golden thread' of strong partnership working and engagement at all levels. *"The voice of Stockton is strong in the joint board"* was a statement we heard.

As seen in the Self-Assessment, data from TSAB identifies 1690 Safeguarding concerns being received in 2022/23, 10% more than the previous year, with 97% of enquiries stating that *'action was taken to mitigate risk, and it was either reduced or removed'*. Overall, there was an increase of people *'feeling safe'* at 74.1% in 2022/23, an increase from 68.3% in 2021/22.

The peer team heard about the strong assurance framework in place across the board, via the multi-agency audit programme, which is based on the learning and key themes from previous years, including learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and looking at themes such as professional challenge and professional curiosity. The self-assessment tool, ratified by the board, currently rates Stockton on Tees safeguarding 7 out of 8 areas rated as 'Green', backed up by the data above. Other assurance measures that were seen to be well established and in place were the High-Risk Adults Panel where multi-agency partners *'bring skills and knowledge to share ideas and views of how best to support the adult their family and wider community from abuse and/or neglect'*.

The peer team also heard about the broad range of Safeguarding cross boundary training via the *'Me Learning'* platform available for staff and providers and were

impressed by its relevant themes, covering legal literacy, Trauma training, Making Safeguarding Personal, S42 Enquiries, Criminal and Sexual Exploitation, and Modern Slavery.

Preparing for Adulthood

The Peer team read and noted that work is underway within the '*Powering Our Futures*' Programme, regarding the challenges identified in supporting children with disabilities and those with special education needs and disabilities as they become young adults. Our findings, from what we observed and heard, were that young people and their families were often experiencing poor outcomes due to lack of joined up and connected pathways. "*we need a whole life approach to working with young people*" was a quote from a member of staff.

Whilst the peer team can see the strong intention from the council across both SEND, Children's services and Adult Social Care, it felt that there needs to a much more clearly defined '*Preparing for Adulthood*' strategy, which could take the excellent philosophy and values driven approach with Stockton on Tees of co-production and partnership working to produce this strategy and operational pathway, developed jointly across all parts of the council. This should therefore be seen as a priority and placed with the areas of consideration and development with the Self-Assessment.

Quality Statement Seven: Safeguarding

The Peer team met the Adult Safeguarding team which manages and progresses section 42 enquiries, working directly with people to keep them safe from neglect, harm or abuse. There was a clear understanding and awareness of risk across the team and this could be seen by the systems in place for addressing concerns and actions to mitigate identified risk. There are no delays present for Section 42 enquiries. However, there were some mixed views described by staff across the service about practice responsibilities undertaking section 42 enquiries and we heard that the safeguarding operational pathway is sometimes unclear with duplication of work and multiple hand-offs. Further consideration should be given to the clarity of this, particularly within the development of the 'front door' and how and where safeguarding should position itself in this space.

Making Safeguarding Personal

It was clear from the discussions, that the team have an excellent understanding of the principles of *'Making Safeguarding Personal'* and have a robust understanding of the legal frameworks of the Care Act and the Mental Capacity Act. It was noted that the Adult Safeguarding Team have been nominated for the Stockton on Tees Adult Social Care Team of the Year Social Work Awards 2024 *'in recognition of its focus on Making Safeguarding Personal, partnership working and the positive outcomes for the people it has worked with'*.

From what was observed and heard, there is a good level of safety in the system, with some excellent daily, weekly and monthly partnership meetings in place and established. The Peer Team heard from staff how proud they are to work within the team, with a particular focus around *'the voice of the person, team working, management availability, networking across the system, culture and openness, learning, and response times'*.

Theme 4: Leadership

This relates to strategic planning, learning, improvement, innovation, governance, management, and sustainability.

Strengths

- Dedicated workforce supported by strong and visible leadership *"I work for the best Teesside Council"*
- Evidence of some excellent partnership working e.g. across Health systems, Healthwatch and Advocacy services – *"progressive very forward-thinking LA"*
- Increased scrutiny and forward planning being applied to the financial position
- Focus on staff development enabling progression
- Leadership committed to co-production. *'Making it Real'* Board strong example
- *'Powering Our Future'* setting a strong strategic vision for the area

Considerations

- Planning for workforce sustainability – lots of long service employees and competition in the locality for some work (care staff)
- Opportunities to consider charging for some services that are currently provided free of charge
- Strategic leadership across the area of transitions needs strengthening, including stronger forecast of the financial implications
- Continue to promote Stockton ‘the place’ in a large ICB footprint.
- Develop a single system story from the data - be clear about “unmonitored waiting times”

Quality Statement Eight: Governance, Management, and Sustainability

The peer team observed there are clear and effective governance, management and accountability arrangements at all levels within the local authority. These provide visibility and assurance on:

- delivery of Care Act duties
- quality and sustainability and risks to delivery
- people’s care and support experiences and outcomes

The local authority uses information about risks, performance, inequalities and outcomes to inform its adult social care strategy and plans, how it allocates its resources, and how it delivers the actions needed to improve care and support outcomes for people and local communities.

There is an articulate, visible and highly respected senior team in place, supported by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, who all understand the strategic priorities for the service and have demonstrated an impressive number of transformational developments over the previous two years. Both the Chief Executive and Director of Adult Social Services are very visible and work hard to engage and listen to staff with good connections in place. *“I live and work here”, “We are a listening organisation”, “We can get access to the ‘top management’ - we can be heard!”, “Our seniors are very supportive!” “We like the ‘Mike Live’ sessions – they are really valuable!”.*

As previously referenced throughout this report, Stockton on Tees has strong

partnership working across the organisation at all levels, and this was seen both set out within the framework of the Self-Assessment and then seen and heard from many stakeholders. NHS partners were overwhelmingly positive about working with Adult Social Care and talked about how this benefits key contracts and a “*focussed effort to improve*” and discussions that were “*open minded*” as strong motivators to making change happen. Given the size and scale of the Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and the Tees Valley Integrated Care Partnership, the peer team would want to highlight the importance of continuing to promote Stockton on Tees ‘*the place*’ to ensure its voice remains present and strong for its residents within a large health and social care ‘footprint’ for the region. We were therefore impressed to see both the Director of Adult Social Services and Chief Executive chair key partnership forums (Coalition of the Willing and Team Stockton). The strong relationship with Healthwatch was also evident where there was a clear focus on collaboration and transparency with a clear joint work programme. Of particular note, the peer team observed how these partnerships have a strong connection and feedback loop with the ‘*Making It Real*’ Board indicating a real desire to hear the voice of the resident. “*The Council are not doing it because they have to - they are doing it because they want to*” (Feedback from a key stakeholder).

The peer team observed that there is strong oversight of the financial position of the service and a savings target of £1.893m for the council overall to reach a balanced budget position for 2024/25, primarily led through the work of the ‘*Powering Our Futures*’ programme. It is clear from what was observed and discussed with the leadership team that there is increased scrutiny and forward planning being applied to the financial position, but the peer team felt that there were opportunities to charge for some services that are currently provided free of charge to the public and therefore create a further income stream. In particular, the provision of carers ‘Time-Out’ service was felt to have opportunity in this area, either with a ‘standard charging model applied or ‘means tested’. This may create opportunity to broaden this for more carers going forward enabling greater sustainability of its provision and importance.

In discussions with the Performance team, it was clear that leaders and senior managers are using data well and are ‘intelligence rich’ in their ability to interpret the information and take management actions. However, the peer team did hear that

more training was needed to develop a greater understanding and use from local Team Managers and teams in order to understand how their performance was impacting on the wider council.

We also felt there is opportunity to develop a single system story from the broader data capturing all of the service, particularly as part of a service user journey where there are currently 'unmonitored' (i.e. not within Power BI) waiting times particularly within reablement. Consideration should also be given to the synergy between performance and finance in order to tell the broader picture of the performance of the service.

Quality Statement Nine: Learning, Improvement, and Innovation.

Learning from people's feedback about their experiences of care and support, and feedback from staff and partners is embedded throughout the local authority's work which informs strategy, improvement activity and decision making at all levels. There is a strong approach to inclusion and co-production underpinned by the *Making it Real Board* in terms of shaping decision making and service development.

There is an inclusive and positive culture of continuous learning and improvement. The local authority has strong external relationships that support improvement and innovation. Staff and leaders engage with external work, including research, and embed evidence-based practice in the organisation. There are processes to ensure that learning happens when things go wrong, and from examples of good practice. Leaders encourage reflection and collective problem-solving and this approach was seen at many levels from local feedback from residents via complaints, right to through to learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews. However, the peer team felt that more could be done around the reporting and recording of complaints whether these have been resolved through informal resolution or via the more formal complaint process. This will enable a much richer and deeper form of feedback to the organisation that might otherwise be missed.

We saw a developing Workforce Strategy that has a good focus on staff development enabling career progression, and this was reflected in staff feedback within focus groups about development opportunities across the service. However, as highlighted previously in this report, the peer team would give question to the

sustainability of the workforce over the next five years, given the significant number of staff with a long length of service, as stated in the Self-Assessment *'those staff over 55 make up 30%, estimating there will be approximately 1,700 posts reaching retirement age in the next 10 years.'* Consideration should therefore be given to the talent mapping of the future workforce and a clear understanding of what roles are likely to be needed in the future, particularly at the 'front door' and within more specialist functions. In addition to this, it should be noted that the workforce needs to reflect the wider population within its workforce. *'In 2021, 4.6% of Stockton on Tees residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 3.5% in 2011. The 1.1 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.'* (ONS (2024)) As well as targeted recruitment, further work needs to be developed to ensure the organisation and its imagery reflects the diversity of its workforce.

There are a clear set of system priorities framed well within the 'Powering Our Futures' programme that are shared by all leaders and staff across both Stockton-on-Tees Council and with their partners. People are very positive about their leaders and the support they receive. People told us that they felt valued, supported and listened to by their immediate managers. People were very positive about their experience of working in Stockton on Tees and enthusiastic about their services. There is a real and tangible sense of pride by everyone working in the organisation lead and supported by the Director of Adult Social Care and her immediate senior leadership team.

The peer team were very impressed by the positivity and enthusiasm of everyone they met within the council. and could see the tangible impact they are making on the lives of people in Stockton-On-Tess. We wish them well in their journey to becoming an "outstanding" service.

Top Tips for Assurance Preparation - for consideration

- Appoint an adult social care lead.
- Regular Political briefings.
- Secure tangible corporate support and buy-in.
- Maximise the Council's adult social care business intelligence capacity to inform the self-assessment, especially data driven evidence.
- Get health partners and integrated services leadership on board.
- Compare and learn from children's inspections.
- Gather insights from partners and providers.
- Be clear on approaches to co-production and responding to diverse needs.
- Encourage organisational self-awareness.

Lessons learned from other peer challenges.

- Councils need an authentic narrative for their adult social care service driven by data and personal experience.
- The narrative needs to be shared with those with a lived experience, carers, frontline staff, team leaders, middle managers, senior staff, corporate centre, politicians, partners in health, third sector and elsewhere.
- Ideally this story is told consistently and is supported by data and personal experience - don't hide poor services.
- This will probably take the form of:
 - What are staff proud to deliver, and what outcomes can they point to?
 - What needs to improve?

- What are the plans to improve services?
- In the preparation phases, consider putting it on all team agendas **asking staff what they do well**, what's not so good and to comment on the plans to improve. Collate the information from this process and add to the self-assessment. Ensure the self-assessment is a living document that is regularly updated.
- Immediately prior to CQC arriving, ask staff what they are going to tell the regulator. **How is their experience rooted in observable data** and adds to the overall departmental narrative? These stories drive the understanding of yourselves and others.
- The regulator is interested in outcomes and impact from activity. The self-assessment needs to reflect this as do other documents.
- **The conversation with the regulator is not therapy!** For those interviewed it should be a description of what they do and the impact they have had in people's lives. Case examples written in the authentic voice of those with a lived experience bring this alive.

Immediate Next Steps

We appreciate the senior political and managerial leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Whilst it is not mandatory for the Council to publish their report, we encourage Council's to do so in the interests of transparency and supporting improvement in the wider sector. The LGA would like to publish this Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge Report on the Association's website but will only do so once we have been advised that it has been put in the public domain by the Council through its own internal governance processes.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice, and guidance on several the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

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In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

Contact Details

For more information about the Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council please contact:

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For more information on the programme of adults peer challenges and the work of the Local Government Association please see our website: [Adult social care peer challenges | Local Government Association](#)

ed the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake an Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge at the Council, and with partners.

Carolyn Nice – Director for Adult Social Services commissioned an independent peer review to assess the ability of the adult social care service to deliver good services to people, as well as preparedness of the adult social service for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. The focus was on an independent perspective on how prepared adult social services are for a Care Quality Commission (CQC)

inspection and how well the organisation is delivering adult social care services for its residents.

The purpose of a peer challenge is to help an authority and its partners assess current achievements, areas for development, and capacity to change. Peer challenges are improvement focused and are not an inspection.

The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government and adult social care (ASC) to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, and material that they read.

Prior to being onsite the LGA Peer Challenge team undertook a case file audit, lived experience interviews, a review of data, and held 1-1 calls with people with lived experience of the services provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council Adult Social Care. The peer team were then onsite for three days holding interviews, focus groups, and discussions to fully understand the adult social care department to develop feedback and recommendations through triangulating the evidence presented.

All information collected was non-attributable to promote an open and honest dialogue.

The members of the peer challenge team were:

- **Stephanie Butterworth** – Director Adult Social Services, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Jon Goodwin** – Peer Challenge Manager, LGA and Interim Assistant Director, Kent County Council
- **Councillor Joanne Harding** – Lead Member for Finance, Change and Governance, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Nick Pryke** – Deputy Director of Community Health and Adult Social Care Operations, Norfolk County Council
- **Alexandra Pitcher** – Assurance and Workforce Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council
- **John Allen** – Principal Social Worker, North East Lincolnshire Council
- **Russell Henderson** – Strategy and Transformation Commissioning Lead, Kingston upon Thames London Borough Council.

The team were on-site at Stockton on Tees Borough Council for three days from 9th July 2024. In arriving at their findings, the peer team:

- Held 36 interviews and discussions with over 150 different people including Councillors, officers, senior leaders, partners, people with lived experience, and carers.
- Read a range of relevant documents provided by Stockton on Tees Borough Council, including a self-assessment.
- Completed 8 case file audits with 22 conversations with people with lived experience.
- Had a combined social care experience amounting to over 216 years.

The peer challenge team spent approximately 184 hours with Stockton on Tees Borough Council; the equivalent of 24.5 working days. Invariably, this is still a snapshot of the organisation rather than being totally comprehensive.

Specifically, the peer team's work focused on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) framework four assurance themes for the up-coming adult social care assurance process. They are:

Care Quality Commission Assurance themes

<p>Theme 1: Working with people. This theme covers:</p>	<p>Theme 2: Providing support. This theme covers:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing Need • Supporting People to Live Healthier Lives • Equity in Experiences and Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Provision, Integration, and Continuity • Partnerships and Communities
<p>Theme 3: How the local authority ensures safety within the system. This theme covers:</p>	<p>Theme 4: Leadership. This theme covers:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Pathways, Systems, and Transitions • Safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, Management, and Sustainability • Learning Improvement and Innovation

The peer challenge team would like to thank Councillors, staff, people with a lived experience, carers, partners, and providers for their open and constructive responses during the challenge process. All information was collected on a non-attributable basis.

Initial feedback was presented to the Council on the last day of the peer challenge and gave an overview of the key messages. This report builds on the presentation and gives a more detailed account of the findings of the peer team.

Key Messages – Strengths

There are observations and suggestions within the main section of the report linked to each of the CQC themes and quality statements. The following are the peer team's key summary highlights:

- Dedicated workforce supported by strong and visible leadership “*I work for the best Teesside Council*”.
- Continuing theme of very positive and engaged wider workforce – a credit to Stockton on Tees!
- The philosophy of advocacy and person-centred working is strong across the organisation and with external partners.
- Efforts to include the voice of people are underway with the Making it Real board.
- Making safeguarding personal is evidenced at all stages with high numbers of people reporting feeling safe (ASCOF).

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Key Messages – Areas for Consideration

- People state having to tell their story more than once and the front door having multiple hand off points, which is a frustration and limits the person's sense of being listened to.
- Improve integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.
- Strategic leadership across the area of transitions needs strengthening, including stronger forecast of the financial implications.
- Planning for workforce sustainability – lots of long service employees and competition in the locality for some work (care staff).
- Develop a single story from the data - be clear about “unmonitored waiting times”.

Case File Audit

As part of the Peer Challenge, a case file audit was carried out on 8 cases. Of the 8 cases, the Peer Team were able to speak to 22 people in receipt of the service (or their family/advocate) to understand their lived experience.

Strengths

- Strong person-centred narrative & recording.
- The voice of the person and the carer was apparent throughout.
- Good evidence of professionalism and values through the case record.
- Rights-based practice is consistent.
- Documentation of person's needs written with clarity and sensitivity, clearly capturing care and support needs using their words.
- Sound evidence of working with the persons wishes, feelings and what's important to them.
- Care Act eligibility and decision making is clearly documented with the person at the centre.
- Good evidence of the recording of multi-disciplinary working and decision making within assessments and case notes.
- Consistent joined up work with Social Workers and Occupational Therapist with good synergy to the assessment work.
- Financial discussions, in respect of potential charging, are clearly evident in every assessment.
- Key principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 identified within assessments and best interest decision making recordings.
- CHC considerations are timely and consistent.

Considerations

- Evidence of strengths-based practice is limited throughout. A strong use of statutory services, but with limited reference to the individual strengths or VCSE/ community / network support. Recording is sometimes deficit focused.
- There is good engagement with carers, but a limited reference to offer of carers assessment or other carers support services. Often carers are not recorded formally, despite being evident in notes.
- MCA recording could be clearer to show practitioner thinking and how decisions have been arrived at.
- Forms and recording templates could better give space for personalised recording to capture the voice of the person and enhance the evidence of professional decision making. Changes here could support a more strengths-based practice approach.

Lived Experience Feedback

Strengths

- People said they had confidence in support from social workers and therapy services and felt listened to.
- Staff were described as supportive, understanding and wanted to work together with people and carers.
- Once working with the team, people felt they could pick up the phone and get support when they needed it.

Considerations

- People described finding information to start with about who to contact and how, quite difficult.
- People described a lack of 'joined up' working between health services, and that they weren't advised of the support available from adult social care by health services.
- People stated that there were some long waits at the beginning of requesting support, with little information about time scales or what would happen next.

Theme 1: Working with People

This relates to assessing needs, planning and reviewing care, arrangements for direct payments and charging, supporting people to live healthier lives, prevention, wellbeing, information and advice, understanding and removing inequalities in care and support, and people's experiences and outcomes from care.

CQC Quality Statement 1 – Assessing Needs

Strengths

- The philosophy of advocacy and person-centred working is strong across the organisation and with external partners.
- The Making it Real board is increasing the voice, and valuing the expertise, of experts by experience in the organisation.
- Where people are waiting for assessment, there is good understanding of risk and some understanding of 'waiting well'.
- Staff value the visibility of the Principal Social Worker in the system and the provision of reflective learning practice sessions.
- Carers support service has good uptake and provides meaningful, person centred intervention for carers that they have a voice in.

Considerations

- People state having to tell their story multiple times, and the front door having multiple hand off points is a frustration and limits their sense of being listened to.
- A consistent approach is needed around rights-based practice and legal literacy across the workforce to ensure parity for people and their outcomes.
- Having a consistent approach to waiting well will help to reduce frustrations and keep people informed.
- Stronger development and embedding the practice approach is needed to fully realise strengths-based practice and 'bring to life' the ambitions of the

practice framework.

- Inconsistency of approach, availability and inequity in the care market limits the choice and control for people.
- The Making it Real board provides a solid foundation to move co-production from the table to the real world. The organisation needs to ensure all of this great work is embedded.

Quality Statement One: Assessing needs.

Assessment, Care Planning and Review Arrangements

It is clear from what was observed, read and heard by the Peer Team, that there is a strong and well understood strategic framework that underpins all the key areas of work across the Council. The '*Powering Our Future Programme*' is based around five key missions: Colleagues, Communities, Partnerships, Transformation and Regeneration. Since July 2023, there has been refined focus on the programme to ensure it addresses the financial challenges and opportunities, as a Borough, whilst improving outcomes for communities, including '*opportunities to build brighter futures for the communities of Stockton on Tees and reduce inequality*'. In addition to this, an acknowledgment of '*carefully managing the council's resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by customers.*'

The Adult Social Care Strategy 2021 -2025 identifies 4 key priorities:

5. *To provide support to people prevent, reduce, or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.*
6. *To ensure people can get the right level and type of support at the right time.*
7. *To develop and support our staff and to support providers of social care services to develop and support their staff.*
8. *To work with and within communities.*

The peer team observed that these priorities were '*present and understood*' in the staff we met across the service at most levels. Staff talked passionately about the need for timeliness and responsiveness in their approaches and expressed a high level of pride in working for the Council in Stockton on Tees. There was a tangible sense of a '*Team Stockton*' philosophy and value base that was demonstrated by statements, "*I'm proud of the difference we make!*" and "*the services here would be definitely good for my family when or if the time comes*". Staff talked openly about their pride in being able to promote independence with a focus on reducing traditional forms of care and support. Recorded information within the case files observed a strong sense of the person and what was important to them. There were high levels of sensitivity and empathy demonstrated throughout with some excellent narrative clearly capturing care and support needs using the person's words as strong references to what mattered to them at the time.

There was also a good understanding of the Care Act (2014) and in particular the 'Wellbeing' principle. A clear understanding of rights-based practice was observed across all files seen of the legal framework of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and how 'best interest' decision making is being taken. It should also be noted that both within case file recording observed and in discussions with the teams, staff spoke passionately about the advantages of multi-disciplinary working and close working relationships both within and across other organisations in finding good outcomes for the public.

Staff interviewed were keen to tell us how their legal literacy underpinned the work they were carrying out with the public, in terms of rights based social care, and using these frameworks to support people with choice and control, which included keeping

people safe. This was triangulated from the case audits carried out, that showed understanding of legally defensible decision making and upholding people's rights, particularly from the mental capacity assessments and best interest records seen. However, the peer team felt that mental capacity recording could be clearer to show practitioner thinking and how decisions have been arrived at.

Advocacy and the voice of the resident

Stockton on Tees Council commission People First as its Advocacy Provider with the majority of referrals to this service (470 in 2023/24) for Relevant Person's Representative in relation to deprivation of liberty. The peer team observed both from the case file audit and talking to experts by experience that the voice of the person and the carer was apparent throughout and there was sound evidence of working with the persons wishes, feelings and what's important to them. Our meetings with Safeguarding Practitioners, Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessors was made clear to us that the role of independent advocacy, as outlined in legislation (IMCA's, IMHA's etc) was central to practice and 'business as usual'. This professional group sited good availability of Advocates in the system and a clear promotion of the role of advocacy. In addition to this the peer team observed and heard clear evidence of advocacy within the day service visit. The voice of the service user was evident in the range of sessions/activities that are organised, with regular newsletters stating what service users felt about attending the service.

The Peer Team also observed strong advocacy principles in the meetings with housing colleagues. Messages came across as "*never giving up*" on people despite struggling to maintain accommodation options or failing accommodation attempts.

The Council was described by advocacy providers and partners as "*forward thinking*", "*want to do well*" and "*really interested compared to other local authorities*". Advocacy is seen as part of the solution. They cited good relationships between the advocacy agency and the council and that there was good professional dialogue. However, the Peer Team did hear that there was felt to be a disconnect between advocacy providers and the Making it Real board. They had not been invited to be part of the board and felt they could make a positive contribution. Finally, the peer team were also impressed by the new Care Act pilot and the restructured Care Act assessment form. The use of "I" statements and placing the service user voice at the centre of the assessment process is a strong indication of Stockton On Tees Borough Council's commitment to ensure advocacy is strong here.

Timeliness of assessments, care planning & reviews

The latest performance information was provided on day one for the peer view visit, and it was clear from the information provided that overall waiting times for assessment were very low across all of the services within Adult Social Care. (90.6% of assessments are completed within 28 days). The largest delays were within the 'front door' service with 42 people waiting for transfer to other teams and 26 people waiting for Mental Health services. All of these delays were within a 28-day timescale and staff were able to demonstrate their approach to managing risk using a RAG based risk system of contacting every resident each week to establish if circumstances have changed. There was a good approach to '*waiting well*' principles, but the Peer Team felt that further understanding of this would enhance the outcomes for residents, particularly within the weekly contact checks made to people.

Most impressively were the very short timescales for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards with all formal applications and authorisations completed within statutory timescales and the organisation performing in the top quartile 25% nationally. (11 days compared to the average of 156 days across the country). In addition, minor aids and adaptations in the home, such as stair lifts, shower pods and ramps operate to timescales within ten weeks from point of contact to installation, demonstrating a real tangible positive impact on people's promotion of their independence and least use of more traditional forms of care and support.

Care and Support Pathways

The peer team were able to interview staff from safeguarding teams, locality teams, learning disabilities teams, hospital teams, Multi-disciplinary Service, Reablement, transitions and Community Occupational Therapists, and felt there are impressive integrated pathways out of hospital which achieve good outcomes for people resulting in few delays.

The peer team did observe that there were numerous small teams under the banner of Early Intervention and Prevention services and felt that there were areas of crossover and some duplication of task and function. This was particularly observed in talking to staff who were often describing very similar functions of early intervention and reablement. In talking with users of the service, it was clear that people described a difficulty in finding information about Adult Social Care in the first

instance and then upon making contact with the service having to tell their story multiple times with a number of hand-off points cited as a frustration and limiting their sense of being listened to.

Redeveloping the Early Intervention and Prevention element of the service should be seen as a priority in order to promote the vision and principles of the council and the Adult Social Care Strategy key principles.

The peer team did identify some delays for transfers of care from within the in-house reablement team for people who had received support and who were waiting for care and support to commence at their home. Some of these delays were reported to be as high as 6 weeks beyond the support and therefore the peer team are of the opinion that it is very important that senior leadership and managers are totally clear of all delays in the system and can articulate this well within the self-assessment.

Quality Assurance

The peer team observed a well-established role and function of the Principal Social Worker (PSW). The post holder demonstrated a passion for good quality person-centred care and support and staff described how they valued the visibility and strong day-to-day connections that was available to them as practitioners and managers. The PSW has been a key facilitator for co-producing the Adult Social Care Workforce Development Plan 2024-26, which staff referred to and talked about and also how they valued the PSW taking time to meet all new starters, having a strong focus on their continuing professional development.

There is strong focus on quality with the newly developed Adult Social Care Practice Framework, which is a good start, but the peer team felt there was limited evidence of strengths-based practice throughout case recording with some of the case file recording observed as deficit focused. Whilst there was a strong use of statutory services, there was limited reference to the individual strengths or the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) / community / network support.

The peer team would recommend that the ambitions of the Practice Framework need to set out a much more clearly defined set of principles of strengths-based working and how this is nuanced and different from 'person-centred' support. Referencing the work of 'Think Local Act Personal' (TLAP) and Making it Real 'I' and 'We' statements will bring about specific principles that should underpin and help to benchmark

practice, along with examples of what good looks like and how this is seen in practice. This should be followed with some clearer defined strengths-based practice development opportunities that encapsulate the true definition of strengths-based practice and support staff in understanding the difference.

It was noted by the peer team that the joint reflective peer practice forums have been well received by staff across the organisation. Staff and other key stakeholders have equally been very complimentary about the internal quality assurance processes by the PSW and Lead Occupational Therapist (LOT)), and staff interviewed were very positive about learning and development opportunities across the workforce.

A Quality and Workforce Development team were set up in 2023 focusing on training compliance and needs and to ensure mandatory compliance is met for staff in key areas of knowledge such as Safeguarding and legal literacy.

Workforce of Adult Social Care

The workforce of operational adult social care is delivered across 21 teams, offering a range of support and specialist intervention, including community-based day options and a dedicated short breaks service for adults with an identified learning disability. This workforce totals approximately 482 staff including commissioners as well as managers and leaders, made up as 87.3% female and 12.6% male staff. The current workforce over 55 years old is 30% and under 25 years old is just 8%. Currently, vacancies are very low across all areas of the service.

Whilst the peer team could see the newly developed workforce strategy 2024–26, and could see the ‘golden thread’ of the vision of the council and its operational strategies, the team felt more is needed about the tangible actions that will support a ‘shift’ of the age profile of the workforce. “*Stockton is somewhere where we come and stay!*” was a typical level of narrative heard by the peer team in meeting many of the staff and this is seen by levels of long service for many. Whilst this is cause for celebration and clear demonstration of the value that staff feel about working for the council, consideration should be given as to how new recruitment will be formed strategically via innovative approaches to recruitment and specific targeting of key positions that are often difficult to recruit to such as Occupational Therapists and Social Workers. Building an articulate career progression pathway in partnership with key stakeholders across the local NHS, Independent Care and Voluntary sector will

support this.

Quality Statement Two: Supporting people to live healthier lives.

Wellbeing Principle

As read within the Self-Assessment, Stockton on Tees has one of the largest gaps in England for life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between the poorest and most affluent areas. It ranks 113 out of 317 local authorities in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The current Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023 is being refreshed and co-produced by partners and key stakeholders. Its key messages have a strong well-being principle throughout:

- *All children and families have the best start in life*
- *Everyone has a healthy standard of living*
- *Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities*
- *Everyone lives long and healthy lives*

The peer team observed strong messages of 'wellbeing' and the wellbeing principle within the council and adult social care, and it was clear from what was heard from most of the people met over the 3 days that the peer team were on site that the 'Wellbeing' principle and 'good health' is at the heart of what all practitioners are saying and carrying out in their daily practice, fundamentally demonstrating a real commitment to the principle of 'wellbeing as set out within the Care Act (2014).

Carers

As referenced within the Self-Assessment the Adult Carers Support Service was brought in-house in 2018 and supports adult carers (over 18) in Stockton on Tees who care for another adult. At the point of this transfer there were 103 carers registered with the service. In 2024, this is now recorded at 2436 which is seen as an estimated support to 12% of the unpaid carer's population in the Borough. 100% of carers receiving a service have a direct payment compared to the England average of 76.8%. Whilst support can vary from advice, support and signposting, there are others who have a range of practical levels of support such as the 'Time Out' service

which offers up to 8 hours of support per month free of charge for carers to have a break from their caring role. The peer team were very impressed by the range and quality of these services and agreed with a staff member of the carers team – *“what we do is real early intervention!”*.

Quality Statement Three: Equity in Experiences and Outcomes.

Diversity and Equity

The peer team felt that the messages and images contained with the Vision for Adult Social care were not reflective of the increasing diverse population of Stockton on Tees and the council’s commitment to equality of experience not as explicit as it could have been. ‘In 2021, 4.6% of Stockton on Tees residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 3.5% in 2011. The 1.1 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.’ (ONS (2024)).

Staff talked very positively about *“we are all Stockton”*, and that equity for people across the community and providing services is *“good enough for my family”*. The sense of collaboration and working together was inclusive and felt genuine. There was no sense of oppressive practice in any of the conversations, but also, no anti-oppressive examples that came through in the discussions. Care and support providers did talk about the disparity for people with learning disabilities in access to equity in health care provision. Providers stated that there is inequality, but this picture is improving with support from the Council and in particular the commissioning team through work done by the Enhanced Health Care Team.

The training offer to providers from Stockton on Tees Borough Council has upskilled the care workforce to enable them to advocate better for the people they support, helping to remove some of the barriers to equality in health and care provision.

From a broader perspective, the Director of Public Health spoke about the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy and how multi-disadvantaged communities is a focus to ensure equity of experience and outcomes. In addition to this, The *‘Coalition of the Willing’* group is chaired by Director of Adult Social Services and this is providing a clear governance for system partners to come together to tackle health inequalities, system challenges and continuous improvement across the local system, which strategically will underpin future actions.

Whilst the peer team are of the opinion that the ethos and principles of equality and diversity are embedded in the customs and practice, the peer team observed it is not easy to identify the *'golden thread'* through policy and practice, and this area therefore needs to be more explicit.

Co-Production and Engagement

The 'Making it Real' Board was established in January 2024 and the peer team consider this to be an exemplar of the best examples of co-production seen within a local authority. The peer team spent time with the 'Making it Real' board members and were impressed by the tangible difference the board is making in terms of an authentic forward-thinking foundation of co-production, rather than engagement.

The peer team heard of the excellent examples of involvement at many levels of the organisation in its design and shaping. We heard powerful messages that were impactful. *'really honest conversations'*, *"citizens doing what citizens want to hear"*, *"If co-production isn't messy, you're not doing it right!"*.

It was felt widely across the Peer Team that this needs to continue to develop and should be more widely shared as a model of good practice for other local authorities to follow.

Theme 2: Providing Support

This relates to market shaping, commissioning, workforce capacity and capability, integration, and partnership working.

Strengths

- Evidence of data and research being used to inform strategic transformation. e.g. Improving quality in care homes.
- Efforts to include the voice of people are underway with the Making it Real board, examples of experts by experience being involved in commissioning new services including evaluating a tender for a day opportunity.
- There are a range of day opportunities services that enable people to live good lives at home e.g. (Wag and company) and the STEPS service connecting people to the VCSE.

- Investment in the provider workforce supports better outcomes for people.
- There is evidence of good working relationships across the system to enable good outcomes for people – e.g. Hospital discharge and the Integrated Single Point of Access (ISPA).
- Reablement outcomes are very good, with a high number of people not requiring a long-term package of care after six weeks.

Considerations

- Consideration of post hospital offer, intermediate care - is it reaching enough people, is the estate working?
- There needs to be a consistent approach to relationships with providers, including quality framework, future opportunities and some specific issues about payments.
- Increase focus on early intervention to prevent unnecessary admissions or interventions.
- There's a need to improve the housing offer and more long-term planning, based on population need.
- Improve integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.

Quality Statement Four: Care Provision, Integration, and Continuity

The peer team agreed with the findings of the Council's Self-Assessment with regards to commissioning activity and the 'golden thread' messages from '*Powering Our Future*' and supported from within the *Adult Strategy 2021-25*, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (due for publication August 2024) and the newly refreshed *Market Position Statement 2023-26*.

It is clear from the information the peer team read and then triangulated with what we observed and heard, that these strategies were formed from feedback with partners and key stakeholders. The level of care provider and stakeholder engagement was very impressive, with a number of engagement and collaborative developments, that have served to redesign and recommission some key contracts, as well as the development of Tees Complex Care and Support framework, and the formation of a leadership and peer support network, which is enabling the sharing of good practice, leadership development and partnership working across providers.

The Council spends £55.9m per annum on its commissioned Adult Social Care services (2021 data), including its in-house services. £32.5m of this is spent on the provision for residential/nursing care for all adults and older people, including those with a learning disability and mental health, with £14.1m being spent on care and support at home services.

The peer team heard that 70% of all mental health placements were made out of the area but could not see a clear plan or proposal to address this and stimulate local market development. The peer team wanted to understand and see evidence of market development either in the VCSE preventative space or in gaps like mental health supported living issues and could not see explicit information on any work that is able to project need into the future, alongside a sufficient understanding of gaps as part of a commissioning strategy. Whilst it is fully acknowledged and understood that developing a more aligned housing and support strategy as part of '*Powering Our Future*', we would recommend a much clearer acknowledgment of the issue within the Self-Assessment and a clear plan to be set out as part of this.

Understanding and management of the market and quality assurance

Stockton on Tees care and support provision has an above average percentage of care homes rated at 'Good' or 'Outstanding', with the England average being 75.7% and the council's overall regulated providers recorded at 77.8%. Split down, this identifies Care at Home services rated 84% at 'Good', with 3% 'Outstanding' and for Care Homes rated at 78% 'Good' with 6% 'Outstanding'. However, it was noted that whilst this is an overall higher than average rating for good or outstanding, there remains to be 16% of care homes with a rating of 'Requires Improvement' and 10% of care at home providers with a rating of 'Requires Improvement.'

Whilst acknowledging there are areas across the care market of excellent provider quality, the peer team felt the work with the provider assessment and market management solution (PAMMS) needed greater evidence of its impact as a quality framework, that would provide assurance as to the performance, legal compliance, risk and quality of providers. Some providers told us that they had not had a quality assurance visit, and that they felt strongly this would support them to be cognisant of their assurance and governance.

The peer team would therefore recommend being clearer as to how market quality and intelligence is being monitored and used across commissioning and in particular clear plans as to how the gap in quality will be reduced. This should also be reflected in the self-assessment.

In-house provider services

The following are regulated services and their most recent CQC inspection outcomes:

- Rosedale Centre – CQC Rating - Good
- Oak Road Residential Care Home – CQC Rating - Good
- Lanark Close Short Breaks Service – CQC Rating - Good
- Stockton-on-Tees Shared Lives Service – CQC Rating - Good
- One Call – CQC Rating - Good

The following are Non-Regulated Day Services:

- Halcyon Centre and Livewell Hub
- Allensway Day Options
- Community Day Options
- STEPS Community Bridge Building

The peer team were very impressed by the in-house quality of services to residents, and feedback from people with lived experience demonstrated the commitment of the Council to support good outcomes.

Making it Real and Engagement

As referenced in section 1, the role of the Making it Real board is really important for the Council's commissioning intentions. It is clear that this is an example of 'true co-production, rather than consultation or *'tokenistic engagement'*, where the voice of people with lived experience is at the heart of the design of services. Good examples were heard where experts by experience have taken part in the tendering process for a day opportunity (Ware Street Day Services.) In addition to this there were other examples observed where *'experts by experience'* have been involved in the organisation's planning and activity models and supported to shape the programme. The recent appointments of Lived Experience Co-ordinator and Assurance and Co-

Production Manager will continue to support innovation and strong involvement at all levels in the organisation and demonstrates Stockton-on-Tees' commitment in this in area to make a real difference.

Relationships with providers and support for them to provide continuity of care.

The peer team were very impressed by the relationships that have been built and created via the regular quarterly forums in place to ensure effective communication. *“Our shared values are ‘Respect, Responsibility and Excellence’ - “All of this is down to the transformation team – they are really supportive”* Others equally cited the role of the transformation team – *“we are research led and research leading! We really are proud to be influencing strengths-based care and support. We would not be here had it not been for Stockton on Tees Borough Council – they have been real enablers and supported us in our ‘well led’ journey!”*

It was noted however, that whilst this level of excellent feedback was strong and came across particularly from many providers, some other providers felt that there was more the Council could do in terms of recognition of achieving an *‘outstanding’* inspection finding from the regulator. Many providers highlighted that connections across some of the locality operational services were not as strong and could be improved, with some sense of disconnection and having to ‘chase’ for urgent reviews. The peer team would recommend having some greater operational connection in to the provider forums which would create a stronger connection and support developing more planned review functions.

The peer team also noted that the implementation of ‘minute by minute’ billing had caused charging to vary for some users of the services, and providers were often left to try to support and explain to people, which was causing some frustration. This was revoked in August 2023 following engagement with providers.

Hospital Discharge

The Self-Assessment identifies Stockton on Tees improving performance for those people remaining at home 91 days following discharge from hospital or reablement

services. This is 94% and is higher than the England average at 82.4%, which is impressive.

Aligning funding from the Better Care Fund and Adult Social Care Discharge to Assess fund, is demonstrating some good outcomes to support hospital discharge and people remaining living at home in the community. The Integrated Single Point of Access was seen and observed as a well-functioning integrated space for staff to ensure the person is central to the assessment and plans of support around them. The team told us how they are *'proud that they hear the patient's voice through everything.'*

However, it was generally observed by the peer team that there could be a greater more defined *'Home First'* model that has a stronger focus on how services can be shaped to respond quickly to avoid hospital admission, coupled with clearer and more defined pathways of reablement support and clear step-down pathways to ensure people are not delayed waiting for commissioned care at home services to commence. Some staff cited delays as long as 17 weeks for care at home services to start, following reablement, in which delays in assessment were seen as a factor in this.

Staff also described how they were working with colleagues in the acute trust in very positive ways, but hugely aware that lack of integrated systems were a factor in sharing essential Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) information and how 'paper-based systems' hampered efficient information sharing. The peer team would highlight the importance of a refreshed model of Home First in order to fully support the key priority 1 and 2 of the Adult Social Care Strategy (provide support to prevent, reduce or delay the need for on-going support and maximise their independence and ensuring People can get the right level of support at the right time)

Quality Statement Five: Partnerships and Community

The peer team met colleagues from housing and could see a clear demonstration of the understanding of housing and adult social care legal frameworks and service criteria across these services. It was impressive to hear that staff were flexible in their application of service criteria and service boundaries in working together to create good outcomes for residents who would be in danger of falling through the

gaps in some service provision.

However, it was felt that some of the relationships on a strategic level remain immature and require further development and shaping and would benefit from a clear housing and social care strategy to ensure those people with complex mental health and learning disability could be provided with more flexible support closer to the borough.

Relationship with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

Continuing the strongly observed 'golden thread' of Stockton on Tees's strategic framework 'Powering Our Future' and in particular 'Partnerships', the Peer Team observed, heard and have read very strong messages about the importance of partnerships and working together in establishing good outcomes for its residents.

As seen in the Self-Assessment, there are a number of *'resilient and established partnerships to ensure a joined up and sustained approach to prevention'*,

Key services include:

- The Multidisciplinary Service
- Integrated Single Point of Access
- Intermediate Care, adaptations and equipment
- The Livewell Dementia Hub
- Learning Disability Day Services
- Social Lights
- Community Connect
- Community Spaces
- STEPS
- The Bread-and-Butter Thing

The peer team had contact with a number of these services and could see the real benefit and impact they are making in terms of prevention and were very impressed by the quality and breadth of support they were providing. Overall, there was excellent feedback provided about relationships across the council, but some

services wanted to hear more about opportunities to tender for specific services and felt *'left out'* of this.

The peer team would therefore recommend a greater level of connection across the VCSE group in particular around the area of 'prevention' and strengths-based practice, where many of these services can be leaders in this space.

Theme 3: Ensuring Safety

This area relates to Section 42 safeguarding enquiries, reviews, safe systems, and continuity of care.

Strengths

- Strong Stockton focus within TSAB, willingness to address complexity and to utilise feedback to improve.
- There is trusted and effective safeguarding partnership working across SBC and the wider system.
- A broad range of Safeguarding cross boundary training and best practice forums available for staff and providers.
- Making safeguarding personal is evidenced at all stages with high numbers of people reporting feeling safe (ASCOF)
- Strong safeguarding leadership and cross team support offer
- Robust 'checks and balances' ensuring social work and OT practice is person-centred and meets required professional standards

Considerations

- Duplicated effort in s42 enquiries can cause confusion of roles and responsibilities and challenges ability to make safeguarding personal.
- Front door is currently struggling to meet demand, truly connect people to a timely prevention offer and adds additional layers to the care journey.
- Transitions into adulthood needs to be defined, proactive and safe. Current pathway is creating "poor experiences and outcomes"
- Focus on waiting times within care pathways is needed.

- Develop a data set that enables managers and teams to drive continuous improvement and give assurance of safe systems.
- Take the opportunity to learn and improve from all sources of feedback i.e. informal complaints.

Quality Statement Six: Safe systems, Pathways, and Transitions

Teesside Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)

Members of the peer team met members of TSAB and a range of key leaders and stakeholders. It was clear from the open discussions that relationships are very established, and priorities are closely connected across both Community Safety and Safeguarding within the Stockton on Tees borough.

Stockton on Tees is one of four local authority members within the board, which is led by an independent chair. There are six statutory members and 23 non statutory members, continuing the strong theme of Stockton's 'golden thread' of strong partnership working and engagement at all levels. *"The voice of Stockton is strong in the joint board"* was a statement we heard.

As seen in the Self-Assessment, data from TSAB identifies 1690 Safeguarding concerns being received in 2022/23, 10% more than the previous year, with 97% of enquiries stating that *'action was taken to mitigate risk, and it was either reduced or removed'*. Overall, there was an increase of people *'feeling safe'* at 74.1% in 2022/23, an increase from 68.3% in 2021/22.

The peer team heard about the strong assurance framework in place across the board, via the multi-agency audit programme, which is based on the learning and key themes from previous years, including learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and looking at themes such as professional challenge and professional curiosity. The self-assessment tool, ratified by the board, currently rates Stockton on Tees safeguarding 7 out of 8 areas rated as 'Green', backed up by the data above. Other assurance measures that were seen to be well established and in place were the High-Risk Adults Panel where multi-agency partners *'bring skills and knowledge to share ideas and views of how best to support the adult their family and wider community from abuse and/or neglect'*.

The peer team also heard about the broad range of Safeguarding cross boundary training via the *'Me Learning'* platform available for staff and providers and were impressed by its relevant themes, covering legal literacy, Trauma training, Making

Safeguarding Personal, S42 Enquiries, Criminal and Sexual Exploitation, and Modern Slavery.

Preparing for Adulthood

The Peer team read and noted that work is underway within the '*Powering Our Futures*' Programme, regarding the challenges identified in supporting children with disabilities and those with special education needs and disabilities as they become young adults. Our findings, from what we observed and heard, were that young people and their families were often experiencing poor outcomes due to lack of joined up and connected pathways. "*we need a whole life approach to working with young people*" was a quote from a member of staff.

Whilst the peer team can see the strong intention from the council across both SEND, Children's services and Adult Social Care, it felt that there needs to a much more clearly defined '*Preparing for Adulthood*' strategy, which could take the excellent philosophy and values driven approach with Stockton on Tees of co-production and partnership working to produce this strategy and operational pathway, developed jointly across all parts of the council. This should therefore be seen as a priority and placed with the areas of consideration and development with the Self-Assessment.

Quality Statement Seven: Safeguarding

The Peer team met the Adult Safeguarding team which manages and progresses section 42 enquiries, working directly with people to keep them safe from neglect, harm or abuse. There was a clear understanding and awareness of risk across the team and this could be seen by the systems in place for addressing concerns and actions to mitigate identified risk. There are no delays present for Section 42 enquiries. However, there were some mixed views described by staff across the service about practice responsibilities undertaking section 42 enquiries and we heard that the safeguarding operational pathway is sometimes unclear with duplication of work and multiple hand-offs. Further consideration should be given to the clarity of this, particularly within the development of the 'front door' and how and where safeguarding should position itself in this space.

Making Safeguarding Personal

It was clear from the discussions, that the team have an excellent understanding of the principles of *'Making Safeguarding Personal'* and have a robust understanding of the legal frameworks of the Care Act and the Mental Capacity Act. It was noted that the Adult Safeguarding Team have been nominated for the Stockton on Tees Adult Social Care Team of the Year Social Work Awards 2024 *'in recognition of its focus on Making Safeguarding Personal, partnership working and the positive outcomes for the people it has worked with'*.

From what was observed and heard, there is a good level of safety in the system, with some excellent daily, weekly and monthly partnership meetings in place and established. The Peer Team heard from staff how proud they are to work within the team, with a particular focus around *'the voice of the person, team working, management availability, networking across the system, culture and openness, learning, and response times'*.

Theme 4: Leadership

This relates to strategic planning, learning, improvement, innovation, governance, management, and sustainability.

Strengths

- Dedicated workforce supported by strong and visible leadership *"I work for the best Teesside Council"*
- Evidence of some excellent partnership working e.g. across Health systems, Healthwatch and Advocacy services – *"progressive very forward-thinking LA"*
- Increased scrutiny and forward planning being applied to the financial position
- Focus on staff development enabling progression
- Leadership committed to co-production. *'Making it Real'* Board strong example
- *'Powering Our Future'* setting a strong strategic vision for the area

Considerations

- Planning for workforce sustainability – lots of long service employees and competition in the locality for some work (care staff)

- Opportunities to consider charging for some services that are currently provided free of charge
- Strategic leadership across the area of transitions needs strengthening, including stronger forecast of the financial implications
- Continue to promote Stockton ‘the place’ in a large ICB footprint.
- Develop a single system story from the data - be clear about “unmonitored waiting times”

Quality Statement Eight: Governance, Management, and Sustainability

The peer team observed there are clear and effective governance, management and accountability arrangements at all levels within the local authority. These provide visibility and assurance on:

- delivery of Care Act duties
- quality and sustainability and risks to delivery
- people’s care and support experiences and outcomes

The local authority uses information about risks, performance, inequalities and outcomes to inform its adult social care strategy and plans, how it allocates its resources, and how it delivers the actions needed to improve care and support outcomes for people and local communities.

There is an articulate, visible and highly respected senior team in place, supported by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, who all understand the strategic priorities for the service and have demonstrated an impressive number of transformational developments over the previous two years. Both the Chief Executive and Director of Adult Social Services are very visible and work hard to engage and listen to staff with good connections in place. *“I live and work here”, “We are a listening organisation”, “We can get access to the ‘top management’ - we can be heard!”, “Our seniors are very supportive!” “We like the ‘Mike Live’ sessions – they are really valuable!”.*

As previously referenced throughout this report, Stockton on Tees has strong partnership working across the organisation at all levels, and this was seen both set out within the framework of the Self-Assessment and then seen and heard from

many stakeholders. NHS partners were overwhelmingly positive about working with Adult Social Care and talked about how this benefits key contracts and a “*focussed effort to improve*” and discussions that were “*open minded*” as strong motivators to making change happen. Given the size and scale of the Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care System and the Tees Valley Integrated Care Partnership, the peer team would want to highlight the importance of continuing to promote Stockton on Tees ‘*the place*’ to ensure its voice remains present and strong for its residents within a large health and social care ‘footprint’ for the region. We were therefore impressed to see both the Director of Adult Social Services and Chief Executive chair key partnership forums (Coalition of the Willing and Team Stockton). The strong relationship with Healthwatch was also evident where there was a clear focus on collaboration and transparency with a clear joint work programme. Of particular note, the peer team observed how these partnerships have a strong connection and feedback loop with the ‘*Making It Real*’ Board indicating a real desire to hear the voice of the resident. “*The Council are not doing it because they have to - they are doing it because they want to*” (Feedback from a key stakeholder).

The peer team observed that there is strong oversight of the financial position of the service and a savings target of £1.893m for the council overall to reach a balanced budget position for 2024/25, primarily led through the work of the ‘*Powering Our Futures*’ programme. It is clear from what was observed and discussed with the leadership team that there is increased scrutiny and forward planning being applied to the financial position, but the peer team felt that there were opportunities to charge for some services that are currently provided free of charge to the public and therefore create a further income stream. In particular, the provision of carers ‘Time-Out’ service was felt to have opportunity in this area, either with a ‘standard charging model applied or ‘means tested’. This may create opportunity to broaden this for more carers going forward enabling greater sustainability of its provision and importance.

In discussions with the Performance team, it was clear that leaders and senior managers are using data well and are ‘intelligence rich’ in their ability to interpret the information and take management actions. However, the peer team did hear that more training was needed to develop a greater understanding and use from local

Team Managers and teams in order to understand how their performance was impacting on the wider council.

We also felt there is opportunity to develop a single system story from the broader data capturing all of the service, particularly as part of a service user journey where there are currently 'unmonitored' (i.e. not within Power BI) waiting times particularly within reablement. Consideration should also be given to the synergy between performance and finance in order to tell the broader picture of the performance of the service.

Quality Statement Nine: Learning, Improvement, and Innovation.

Learning from people's feedback about their experiences of care and support, and feedback from staff and partners is embedded throughout the local authority's work which informs strategy, improvement activity and decision making at all levels. There is a strong approach to inclusion and co-production underpinned by the *Making it Real Board* in terms of shaping decision making and service development.

There is an inclusive and positive culture of continuous learning and improvement. The local authority has strong external relationships that support improvement and innovation. Staff and leaders engage with external work, including research, and embed evidence-based practice in the organisation. There are processes to ensure that learning happens when things go wrong, and from examples of good practice. Leaders encourage reflection and collective problem-solving and this approach was seen at many levels from local feedback from residents via complaints, right to through to learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews. However, the peer team felt that more could be done around the reporting and recording of complaints whether these have been resolved through informal resolution or via the more formal complaint process. This will enable a much richer and deeper form of feedback to the organisation that might otherwise be missed.

We saw a developing Workforce Strategy that has a good focus on staff development enabling career progression, and this was reflected in staff feedback within focus groups about development opportunities across the service. However, as highlighted previously in this report, the peer team would give question to the sustainability of the workforce over the next five years, given the significant number

of staff with a long length of service, as stated in the Self-Assessment *'those staff over 55 make up 30%, estimating there will be approximately 1,700 posts reaching retirement age in the next 10 years.'* Consideration should therefore be given to the talent mapping of the future workforce and a clear understanding of what roles are likely to be needed in the future, particularly at the 'front door' and within more specialist functions. In addition to this, it should be noted that the workforce needs to reflect the wider population within its workforce. *'In 2021, 4.6% of Stockton on Tees residents identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category, up from 3.5% in 2011. The 1.1 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.'* (ONS (2024)) As well as targeted recruitment, further work needs to be developed to ensure the organisation and its imagery reflects the diversity of its workforce.

There are a clear set of system priorities framed well within the 'Powering Our Futures' programme that are shared by all leaders and staff across both Stockton-on-Tees Council and with their partners. People are very positive about their leaders and the support they receive. People told us that they felt valued, supported and listened to by their immediate managers. People were very positive about their experience of working in Stockton on Tees and enthusiastic about their services. There is a real and tangible sense of pride by everyone working in the organisation lead and supported by the Director of Adult Social Care and her immediate senior leadership team.

The peer team were very impressed by the positivity and enthusiasm of everyone they met within the council. and could see the tangible impact they are making on the lives of people in Stockton-On-Tess. We wish them well in their journey to becoming an "outstanding" service.

Top Tips for Assurance Preparation - for consideration

- Appoint an adult social care lead.
- Regular Political briefings.
- Secure tangible corporate support and buy-in.
- Maximise the Council's adult social care business intelligence capacity to inform the self-assessment, especially data driven evidence.
- Get health partners and integrated services leadership on board.
- Compare and learn from children's inspections.
- Gather insights from partners and providers.
- Be clear on approaches to co-production and responding to diverse needs.
- Encourage organisational self-awareness.

Lessons learned from other peer challenges.

- Councils need an authentic narrative for their adult social care service driven by data and personal experience.
- The narrative needs to be shared with those with a lived experience, carers, frontline staff, team leaders, middle managers, senior staff, corporate centre, politicians, partners in health, third sector and elsewhere.
- Ideally this story is told consistently and is supported by data and personal experience - don't hide poor services.
- This will probably take the form of:
 - What are staff proud to deliver, and what outcomes can they point to?
 - What needs to improve?
 - What are the plans to improve services?
- In the preparation phases, consider putting it on all team agendas **asking staff**

what they do well, what's not so good and to comment on the plans to improve. Collate the information from this process and add to the self-assessment. Ensure the self-assessment is a living document that is regularly updated.

- Immediately prior to CQC arriving, ask staff what they are going to tell the regulator. How is their experience rooted in observable data and adds to the overall departmental narrative? These stories drive the understanding of yourselves and others.
- The regulator is interested in outcomes and impact from activity. The self-assessment needs to reflect this as do other documents.
- The conversation with the regulator is not therapy! For those interviewed it should be a description of what they do and the impact they have had in people's lives. Case examples written in the authentic voice of those with a lived experience bring this alive.

Immediate Next Steps

We appreciate the senior political and managerial leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Whilst it is not mandatory for the Council to publish their report, we encourage Council's to do so in the interests of transparency and supporting improvement in the wider sector. The LGA would like to publish this Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge Report on the Association's website but will only do so once we have been advised that it has been put in the public domain by the Council through its own internal governance processes.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice, and guidance on several the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

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In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

Contact Details

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For more information on the programme of adults peer challenges and the work of the Local Government Association please see our website: [Adult social care peer challenges | Local Government Association](#)

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 OCTOBER 2024

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Cabinet Member for Access Communities and Community Safety - Councillor Stephenson

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

SUMMARY

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a national quality mark that seeks to reward organisations that demonstrate a customer-focused commitment to all that they do. Certification to the Customer Service Excellence standard is through a rigorous assessment process which includes a review of documents that demonstrate compliance against each element of the standard and an on-site visit to observe practical evidence.

There are 5 criteria that must be satisfied with a number of elements within each. Compliance plus is awarded for elements where particular strength is demonstrated.

Accreditation operates on a 3-year cycle, with a full assessment in year 1 followed up by a 12-month and a 24-month annual review to ensure standards are maintained. Stockton Borough Council has been accredited with Customer Service Excellence since 2010 and has demonstrated continuous improvement through the assessment cycles.

This report details the outcomes of the 24-month review which took place June 2024, and confirms that the Council has retained full certification, achieving full compliance across all 57 aspects of assessment with compliance plus for 17 elements, a further increase of 1 from the 2023 annual review.

Details include how Powering our Future (POF) themes have been prevalent in conversations between the assessor and staff and, in written evidence/examples submitted for assessment. It is positive to note that 8 out of the 17 Compliance Plus points achieved this year, reference how POF themes and projects have demonstrated CSE.

The report includes information about the removal of the CSE accreditation body, UKAS from future external CSE Assessments and details the future delivery CSE Staff Awards, STARS Awards and Think Smart, Think Big scheme.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of outcome of the Council's 24-month Customer Service Excellence review and to note the ongoing achievements and commitment to CSE across Council Services. The report also starts to consider future delivery of the CSE assessment process and how this can be further integrated into the Council's POF programme and Design Principles.

DETAIL

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE – 24 MONTH REVIEW

1. The Customer Service Excellence standard tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.
2. The framework consists of 57 aspects of assessment grouped across 5 criteria: -
 - Customer Insight
 - Culture of the Organisation
 - Information and Access
 - Delivery
 - Timeliness and Quality of Service
3. In August 2022, a full assessment was undertaken with the Council achieving full compliance with all 57 aspects and a number of compliance plus ratings. The 12-month review in July 2023 confirmed that the Council continued to meet the Customer Service Excellence standards.
4. The 24-month review was carried out this year in June 2024. Documentary evidence was submitted in advance and the assessor was on site for 2 days, meeting staff from a range of Council services who contributed supporting evidence and participated in review meetings with the assessor. The Council has retained full certification, achieving full compliance across all 57 aspects of assessment with compliance plus for 17 elements, a further increase of 1 from the 2023 annual review. Points of compliance plus for 2024 included 7 within Customer Insight, 4 within Culture of the organisation, 4 within Information and Access and 1 within Delivery
5. During the 2024 review, the assessor was complimentary about the quality of the report and evidence submitted and made comments about the energy and enthusiasm of staff across all services and their ongoing dedication to delivery high quality customer services.
6. The assessor specifically highlighted the ongoing digital work of self-serve solutions, including the development of Stockton Information Directory (SID) and, the ability for the customers to access information about roadworks in their areas and across the Borough in real time.
7. It was positive to note that the assessor highlighted that the Power our Future projects confirm the importance of customers and communities – includes the commitment to be 'bold, brave and innovative as a Council. Feedback noted that Powering our Future themes were clearly coming through in conversations with staff and in written evidence/examples and, the Powering of Future evidence has resulted in retaining compliance plus over 8 out of the 17 compliance plus points.
8. The increase of compliance plus points from 6 to 7 in the criteria Customer Insights, was specifically attributed to the Powering our Future programme, which will embed further contact and communication with local communities and businesses.
9. The assessor did not highlight any specific areas of improvement but noted that the Council should continue with customer journey mapping, identifying touchpoints and how customers feel at each of these and how they would like customers to feel. The assessor also acknowledged work to build on good practice of understanding customers wants vs needs and educating customers effectively.
10. This year's assessment completes the 3-year cycle.

CUSTOMER SERVICES EXCELLENCE SCHEME AND ACCREDITATION

11. The Customer Service Excellence scheme was launched in 2008 with governmental backing and the Centre for Assessment is the only CSE assessment body that is UKAS accredited for ISO Standards. The current Scheme has a national quality mark that seeks to reward organisations that demonstrate a customer-focused commitment to all that they do.
12. The Council has been part of the CSE Scheme since 2010 and has demonstrated continuous improvement through the assessment cycles. Certification to the CSE standard is achieved through a rigorous assessment process which includes a review of documents that demonstrate compliance against each element of the standard and an on-site visit to observe practical evidence.
13. The Council has been advised that the Government no longer requires the CSE Standard to be accredited and subsequently UKAS have confirmed that they will withdraw their involvement from 2025. Whilst the Centre of Assessment has told us that there will be no impact on how future assessments are designed and conducted, it does mean that the attainment of CSE standard will no longer have a 'national quality mark' associated with it.
14. There are benefits that the CSE scheme brings without the national quality mark including assessing tangible, measurable inputs, however, the process requires significant resources from the Council. The current assessment process is managed by the Council's Customer Service Team, who spend significant time co-ordinating information across teams and services, collating and submitting evidence for assessment and managing site visits and staff meetings. Staff time is also required across other Council Teams who support and contribute to this piece of work, particularly in year 1 of the cycle, when the full assessment happens. There is also a modest fee associated with the assessment.
15. The Council has maintained and improved its Customer Service Excellence accreditation since 2010 and the principles underpinning the framework are now firmly established in culture and practice. The customer journey and experience are understood and embedded across all Council Services and teams, who feed into our CSE framework. Continuous work will be undertaken to ensure that CSE continues to be integral to future service design and delivery, building on the success of the Council 14-year CSE accreditation.
16. As the Council comes to the end of its current Customer Service Excellence 3-year cycle, it is timely to review the future assessment model and review how the Council will further embed Powering Our Future design principles to ensure an ongoing focus on the customer in all that we do.

STAFF AWARDS - REWARDS & RECOGNITION

17. The annual Staff Awards for Customer Service Excellence were held on 8th February 2025 at ARC. These awards celebrate staff achievements across a number of judged categories recognising employee's outstanding contributions and achievements in Customer Service Excellence. This year, the Council incorporated the 'Stars' Awards which were introduced in 2023, these awards follow staff nominations for colleagues who has done something noteworthy throughout the year
18. Work is currently on going to further consolidate the annual Customer Service Excellence Awards, STARs Awards and embed the Think Smart, Think Big schemes. This piece of work will bring together all these recognition and reward programmes in an annual seamless ceremony, to celebrate colleagues' success together.

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