

People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 8th September 2025.

Present: Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Niall Innes, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Hugo Stratton and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: Kellie Wigley (Children Services), Aishah Waite, Michelle Gunn (Corporate Services), Emma Crawford Moore (Family Action), Cheryl Hall (Cleveland Police), Sarah Massiter, Aimee Preston (Harrogate & District Foundation Trust)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr John Gardner and Cllr Eileen Johnson

PEO/22/25 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

PEO/23/25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PEO/24/25 Minutes

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PEO/25/25 Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working in Early Help

The Committee received a presentation from Family Action and the key issues highlighted and discussed included:

- Family Action had a strategic partnership with the Council since 2023, after previously being part of a sub-contract arrangement with Harrogate & District Foundation Trust. It was a charity of over 150 years which had a mission to support people through change, challenge, or crisis and speak up for the importance of family in national and local policymaking.
- As a strategic partner, Family Action aimed to coordinate the offer of Early Help and make sure there wasn't duplication. Due to being a charity, they had access to funding that the Council could not always apply for. The partnership also allowed a flexibility in delivery offer to respond to needs and demands. The length of the partnership, a 5-year contract with a 5-year extension period, meant that they were able to deliver change.
- The information gathered on a family was kept with them when they moved from different services due to the partnership arrangement and they were able to "step" families up or down into social care. They received information regarding families they are working with from different services including schools and nurseries.
- The services provided by Family Action included family outreach such as empowering families by attending meetings with them and sitting with them

while making telephone calls rather than doing this for them, funding isolated one-off events such as school trips through their Poverty Forum, delivering programmes in the family hubs, and carrying out budgeting events for Barclays. Targeted work was carried out in areas where there was higher demand.

- Family Actions Holidays Are Fun activities not only centred on the child but were also open for the family to attend and get involved. They also gave opportunities to children and young people to be part of community events such as the Community Carnival at Stockton International Riverside Festival and displays at Preston Park Museum and Grounds.
- Family Action supported the whole family and due to their connections with the Family Hubs and wider community, seek out other support opportunities for the families they work with.
- A case study was highlighted regarding a parent who received support after gaining full time custody of his child while homeless. The service had assisted in registering for housing, introduced him to the Family Hubs, helped him to learn about the day-to-day needs of looking after a child, referred him to the foodbank, and even helped him to get a fridge for his new home. The service even assisted when he was living out of the area for a short period.
- Members questioned how long Family Action would support a family and informed that it varied upon the family's needs but up to six months maximum. Most families were supported for a shorter period, but they would not withdraw services until the family felt comfortable.
- It was further questioned what the barriers were for the Council's partners in Early Help and informed that having shared systems since becoming a strategic partner had made a huge difference. Procedural changes would also pose issues, and there was a need to ensure that all services were around the table, and everyone was heard, when they were being made.
- Members also questioned if there was an age limit for the children in the families Family Action work with. It was confirmed that that while there wasn't an age limit, they did not get many referrals for older children. When they did Family Action work with the child direct, on a needs lead basis.

The Committee also receive a presentation from Cleveland Police regarding the PiTstop initiative. The key issues from the presentation were:

- PiTstop was an early intervention, chaired by the Police, designed to share information across multiple agencies to ensure that need, harm and possible risk were identified and support provided. It aimed to reduce the demand on the Children's Hub by diverting Police referrals that were screened and assessed by the Police as not meeting a Social Care threshold but there were still concerns to the PiTstop service. High risk cases and medium risk cases that met the Local Authority Social Care threshold continued to be sent to the Children's Hub.
- Partners included Adult Safeguarding Team, Early Help, Health, Education, Housing, Youth Justice, Change Grow Live, and Harbour.
- Cases considered for PiTstop included a child concern, a vulnerable adult, or domestic abuse when the threshold was not met. If the parties were active to Social Care the Police would share the information with them. All Domestic Abuse referrals to PiTstop had received a second risk assessment by the Police Safeguarding Officers. The Police's threshold following assessment was lower than the Local Authority threshold and therefore these cases would be referred to PiTstop.
- PiTstop had been operating in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council area since March 2024. The data regarding Police referrals received by the Children's Hub

showed that these had decreased by 25.90% between March-August 2023 and March-August 2024. Due to its success Middlesbrough were looking to replicate the service in their area,

- It was questioned whether there were any patterns of when referrals were received. It was noted that referrals decreased during school holidays, when they were more likely to receive calls regarding anti-social behaviour. They increased in September when children returned to school. Member questioned whether the Council needed to ensure all schools were engaged with PiTstop to ensure they were fully aware of the help available, and it was confirmed that this would be helpful.
- The Early Help support being carried out within schools was praised and it was felt that information sharing between the police and schools had improved since the initiative. Information on anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood disputes and other issues were now being shared with schools, therefore schools were able to monitor and support the families involved.
- Member questioned whether there were any areas where they were receiving lots of referrals and informed these were coming from across the Borough, and deprivation was not a factor in the cases that they were working with.

The Committee received a third presentation from Harrogate and District Foundation Trust (HDFT) Growing Healthy 0-19 Service. The information and issues discussed included:

- HDFT provided support to children, young people and families, which included perinatal care and mental health care, parent support, safe sleep, child development, and healthy lifestyle promotion through Health Visitors, school nursing and public health initiatives such as EatWell. In addition, they provided specialist support and support with transitions to primary school, secondary school and adulthood.
- The service was referring 252 families of 0–5-year-olds to targeted single agency support and 278 families of 0–5-year-olds to multi-agency support. For families of 5–19-year-olds, they were referring 90 to targeted single agency support and 42 to multi-agency support.
- HDFT worked with parents through Health Visitors co-located within the Family Hub in Billingham, and it was believed this had worked extremely well therefore should be replicated in other Hubs.
- The service provided several groups and programmes from the Hubs, and Health Visitors would signpost new and expectant parents to their local Hub. The Family Hubs were praised for the number of services that were available universally and HDFT felt staff had good working relationships with the Family Hubs. However, sometimes there was duplication between HDFT services and family hub offer and more joined up working would be beneficial.
- HDFT believed that Stockton-on-Tees was an inclusive area to work with, had positive working relations with Family Action and they felt included in Team Around the Family meetings when invited. However, there was scope to lead more on services and support. It was also noted that communication between the services could be improved as sometimes a family would be working with different services in silos. While systems between the Council and some services such as Family Action were shared, they were not shared with HDFT, and it would be useful. There were issues with confidentiality and levels of access to information, and the work taking place in preparation for the Family First Partnership reforms would be addressing this.
- Members questioned if there were any other ways to improve silo working and the midwifery pathway was given as an example, which ensured that meetings

took place with health visitors to identify any issues and assist in Health Visitors planning. HDFT also noted that they refer to the speech and language service but did not receive information on the outcomes for the family. If they had this information, they may be able to help the family more.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PEO/26/25 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme 2025-2026

Members were reminded of the Children and Young People workshop taking place on 29 September where partners had been invited to co-produce the Early Help Strategy. The Chair would be attending to observe and feedback to the Committee,

It was noted that Stockton Parent Carer's Forum had been invited to the October meeting but were unable to attend. Members therefore requested written evidence to be submitted. A presentation on the Family First Partnership Reforms would be added to the agenda for the October meeting.

It was agreed that the Progress update for the Scrutiny Review of Cost of Living be moved to November meeting.

AGREED that the Work Programme be updated.

Chair: