

**Date:**

Thursday 23 April 2026 at 5.00 pm

**Venue:**

Council Chamber, Dunedin House, Columbia Drive, Thornaby, TS17 6BJ

**Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council)**

Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Clare Besford, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Richard Eglington, Cllr Paul Rowling and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE

**Agenda**

1. **Evacuation Procedure** (Pages 7 - 10)
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes** (Pages 11 - 30)

**Cllr Clare Besford - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

**Cllr Norma Stephenson - Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety**

5. **Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse - Final Report of the Community Safety Select Committee** (Pages 31 - 104)

**Cllr Paul Rowling - Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport**

6. **Minutes of Various Bodies** (Pages 105 - 138)
7. **Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025-2030 - Implementation Update** (Pages 139 - 174)
8. **Pride in Place - Central Stockton and Portrack - Update** (Pages 175 - 180)
9. **Post-16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transport - Approval to Launch a Formal Public Statutory Consultation on Potential Changes to Discretionary Transport Support** (Pages 181 - 186)
10. **RIPA Inspection Outcome Report** (Pages 187 - 188)
11. **Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited Annual Report** (Pages 189 - 194)

Update on performance of Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company

**12. Resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for part of agenda item - Operational Depot Provision - Estate Rationalisation and Acquisition**

Officers consider that the appendices to the following item include exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and that the public should be excluded from that part of the meeting where exempt information may be considered. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Cabinet is recommended to resolve to exclude the public from part of the meeting accordingly. At the time of the issuing of the agenda no objections had been made to the exclusion.

**13. Operational Depot Provision - Estate Rationalisation and Acquisition (Pages 195 - 204)**

**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](mailto: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**

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

## Council Chamber, Dunedin House Evacuation Procedure & Housekeeping

### Entry

Entry to the Council Chamber is via the Council Chamber entrance indicated on the map below.



In the event of an emergency alarm activation, everyone should immediately start to leave their workspace by the nearest available signed Exit route.

The emergency exits are located via the doors on either side of the raised seating area at the front of the Council Chamber.

Fires, explosions, and bomb threats are among the occurrences that may require the emergency evacuation of Dunedin House. Continuous sounding and flashing of the Fire Alarm is the signal to evacuate the building or upon instruction from a Fire Warden or a Manager.

The Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point is in the overflow car park located across the road from Dunedin House.

**The allocated assembly point for the Council Chamber is: D2**

Map of the Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point - the overflow car park:



All occupants must respond to the alarm signal by immediately initiating the evacuation procedure.

When the Alarm sounds:

1. **stop all activities immediately.** Even if you believe it is a false alarm or practice drill, you **MUST** follow procedures to evacuate the building fully.
2. **follow directional EXIT signs** to evacuate via the nearest safe exit in a calm and orderly manner.
  - do not stop to collect your belongings
  - close all doors as you leave
3. **steer clear of hazards.** If evacuation becomes difficult via a chosen route because of smoke, flames or a blockage, re-enter the Chamber (if safe to do so). Continue the evacuation via the nearest safe exit route.
4. **proceed to the Evacuation Assembly Point.** Move away from the building. Once you have exited the building, proceed to the main Evacuation Assembly Point **immediately** - located in the **East Overflow Car Park**.
  - do not assemble directly outside the building or on any main roadway, to ensure access for Emergency Services.

**5. await further instructions.**

- **do not re-enter the building under any circumstances without an “all clear”** which should only be given by the Incident Control Officer/Chief Fire Warden, Fire Warden or Manager.
- do not leave the area without permission.
- ensure all colleagues and visitors are accounted for. Notify a Fire Warden or Manager immediately if you have any concerns

**Toilets**

Toilets are located immediately outside the Council Chamber, accessed via the door at the back of the Chamber.

**Water Cooler**

A water cooler is available at the rear of the Council Chamber.

**Microphones**

During the meeting, members of the Committee, and officers in attendance, will have access to a microphone. Please use the microphones, when invited to speak by the Chair, to ensure you can be heard by the Committee and those in attendance at the meeting.

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## Cabinet

A meeting of Cabinet was held on Thursday 12th March 2026.

**Present:** Cllr Lisa Evans (Leader of the Council), Cllr Pauline Beall (Cabinet Member), Cllr Clare Besford (Cabinet Member), Cllr Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member), Cllr Richard Eglinton (Cabinet Member), Cllr Paul Rowling (Cabinet Member) and Cllr Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member).

**Officers:** Mike Greene, Peter Bell, Adam Bateman, Neil Brama, Julie Butcher, Tracey Carter, Jane Edmonds, Mike Greene, Kirsty Grundy, Clare Harper, Reuben Kench, Gill McCleave, Neil Mitchell, Ged Morton, Carolyn Nice, Iain Robinson, Martin Skipsey, Jane Smith, Edwin Squire, Marc Stephenson and Gary Woods.

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Marc Besford (Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Lynn Hall, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Sylvia Walmsley and Cllr Stephen Dodds.

**Apologies:** None.

### **CAB/96/25 Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the evacuation procedure was noted.

### **CAB/97/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

### **CAB/98/25 Minutes**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2026 be approved.

### **CAB/99/25 Scrutiny Review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service - Final Report of Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service.

The Care Act 2014 gave carers the same legal right to assessment and support as the person they care for. The most recent Census 2021 found that there were 5.8 million unpaid carers in the UK, with 1.7 million of these people providing 50 or more hours of care per week (Key facts and figures | Carers UK).

Carers play a substantial and vital role in meeting social care needs, with the cost of replacement care locally for Stockton-on-Tees having previously been estimated to be

around £464 million annually. From an early intervention and prevention perspective, addressing the needs of carers enables Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) to delay or possibly avert the need for complex and costly social care interventions, and by sustaining carers within their caring role, the stability of local adult health and social care services is supported. Identifying and providing support to these individuals was not just mandated by the Care Act 2014, but a sound economic and socially responsible decision (which may also prevent carers themselves needing services in their own right). Providing information, advice and support to carers ensured they promoted their own wellbeing, carer breakdown be prevented, and resilient communities are established.

The local Adult Carers Support Service was brought in-house to SBC in January 2018 and worked with adults who were providing informal care and support for adults across the Borough. Since then, the service had developed significantly, with over 5,000 referrals during this time. As of June 2025, it was working with 3,200 unpaid carers within Stockton-on-Tees, offering ongoing advice, information and support alongside statutory carers assessments, support planning, carers personal budgets, and time-out assistance. SBC were also supporting nearly 2,000 carers with a direct payment, which amounted to a projected spend of £550,000 for this provision in this financial year.

In related matters, the Adult Carers Support Service had also had some initial involvement with the transitions programme as part of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Powering Our Future (POF) initiative – a new way of operating for the Council which sought to work with partners and communities to put in place new and innovative approaches, allowing SBC to not only save money but also reshape what it does for the better, and in the best interests, of local residents.

Whilst the existing offer was considered to be effective, it was felt that it would be of benefit for the service to be scrutinised to provide assurance around its current delivery. It was hoped that this review would help highlight any gaps in the service and, in turn, help shape future developments for local provision.

The Committee took evidence from key personnel from within the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate, the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), Mobilise (an external organisation working with SBC), and Eastern Ravens Trust. In addition, the Committee considered the recently published Care Quality Commission (CQC) report following the late-2024 inspection of SBC adult social care services, as well as other Local Authority approaches / good practice in supporting carers. Committee Members also visited the LiveWell Dementia Hub to engage with staff and carers.

RESOLVED that:-

1. In terms of general Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service development, SBC should:
  - a) Ensure measures are put in place as part of the review of the Council's 'front door' to strengthen identification of carers and the promotion of the local support offer (including the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service).
  - b) Ascertain and consider the findings from the London School of Economics and Political Science (Care Policy and Evaluation Centre) research project on what

support combinations help improve carers' lives and what works to facilitate availability of and access to this support.

c) Consider ways to increase the response rate for its annual carers consultation survey.

2. Regarding the partnership with Mobilise (the UK's digital platform for unpaid carers), SBC should:

a) Develop its own in-house digital support offer for local carers to build on / complement the services available through this external provider.

b) Ensure it has the necessary quality and performance controls in place (including the need to report on measurable targets) to monitor the effectiveness of this arrangement.

c) Seek to understand any separate arrangements that Council's outside the North East have with Mobilise and whether these enhance the offer to carers more than the ongoing partnership with the 10 North East Local Authorities.

3. In relation to the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service 'Time Out' element, SBC should:

a) Complete an internal review of the booking system to identify ways of creating more flexibility for carers when requested a break from their caring role.

b) Consider whether it would be appropriate to introduce a standing / means-tested charge for the service to broaden this for more carers going forward, enabling greater sustainability of its provision and importance (as identified via the LGA Peer Assurance Challenge of SBC Adult Social Care in July 2024).

4. Promotion of the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service offer to young carers should be strengthened so they are more informed about the support available to them when they reach 18.

5. Consideration should be given to the ways in which the Stockton-on-Tees Adult Carers Support Service can build on what appeals to young carers when they approach / reach 18 so they are more compelled to seek support in their caring role when they become young adults.

6. The new carers awareness e-learning module be rolled out to SBC staff, Members and external partners.

7. SBC further considers how the local support offer for carers can be promoted within the wider health system (including general practices and community settings).

8. SBC provides a response to the Committee on the carer-related commentary included within the Care Quality Commission (CQC) final report on SBC adult social care (published in October 2025).

## **CAB/100/25 Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030**

Consideration was given to a report on the Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030.

The current Adult Social Care Strategy ran from 2021-25 and provided the Council and the public with a clear set of priorities. Having a strong understanding local needs for care and support was a key requirement of the local authority Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance framework, so having a new set of priorities from 2026

was agreed as essential to support the next phase in the Council's journey to meet the evolving needs of the local population.

The draft Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-30 was developed in partnership with the MIRB.

The plan was originally developed in late spring 2025 in collaboration with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) who supported the Council in engaging with citizens and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups to understand what they believed the priorities for Adult Social Care should be over the next 4 years.

Working with the MIRB, this information was reviewed and a set of key priorities developed along with an intentionally slimmed down strategy, acknowledging the Adult Social Care Strategy's place alongside the Stockton on Tees Plan 2024 and Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030. The approved draft version was shared with key partners during November / December 2025 to gather their views. Engagement included VCSE providers (through a direct Catalyst mailshot and discussions with key partners at the Health and Wellbeing Forum), Healthwatch, NHS partners (North Tees Hospital, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust) and social care providers.

Based on this feedback, a revised version was developed and shared at Adult Social Care Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team for agreement.

RESOLVED that the final version of the Strategy be endorsed and the further work that will be progressed to develop accessible formats with support from the Making it Real Board (MIRB) be noted.

### **CAB/101/25 Levelling Up Fund - Yarm Public Realm**

Consideration was given to a report that provided a progress update on the Round 1 Levelling Up Fund programme of interventions along with a summary of the public engagement undertaken to inform whether the Council should proceed with the Yarm High Street public realm proposals as presented to the public in May 2025. In response to the majority 'no' vote that was received, the report sets out a series of options to inform a decision on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget for Yarm High Street.

The report provided a summary update of all Levelling Up Fund (LUF) interventions before focusing specifically upon the Yarm High Street public realm element of the programme.

The approved LUF programme was developed in response to the publication of LUF Round 1 application in 2021 with the objectives of delivering major proposals in Yarm and Eaglescliffe under the priority themes of Transport, Culture and Town Centre Regeneration.

The bid focussed on delivery of improvements to cultural facilities in, and enhancements to, Preston Park Museum and Grounds (PPMG), redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall and public realm enhancements on Yarm High Street and delivery of cycleway connections in Yarm and Eaglescliffe.

In March 2023, Cabinet noted that work had been underway to develop a greater level of understanding on the scope, cost and deliverability of the agreed interventions and approved a funding profile to reflect the proposed interventions across Yarm High Street, PPMG and Cycleway infrastructure.

Since then, work had been underway to deliver a range of interventions at PPMG, with completion of the Spence Building in September 2025, a remodelled cafe and new toilets, additional parking and improvements to the Aviary and playground. A planning application for the demolition and redevelopment of South Lodge was submitted in January 2026.

Work to create an improved cycle link along Durham Lane to connect key employment sites and surrounding residential areas commenced in January 2026 and were on programme to complete in September 2026. The route would be comprised of segregated cycle routes, shared route, and new crossing facilities between Elton Interchange and Cleasby Way junction, extending to the new western access to Eaglescliffe Station.

The programme of works for Yarm High Street, as set out in the LUF Round 1 bid was focussed on a public realm scheme and the redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, in partnership with Yarm Town Council, to bring the building back into use as visitor attraction and to replace the public toilets that were displaced because of the works. The redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall was completed in September 2023 and new public toilets, located at Yarm Library opened in November 2022.

To help shape the public realm element of the High Street intervention and to gain insights into understand local priorities and opportunities, two periods of public consultation were undertaken in 2022.

The first period of consultation was undertaken in August 2022, for a period of three weeks. The consultation was promoted widely on social media and local media. Staffed engagement events were held in Yarm Library, and an online consultation form was available on the Council's website.

The results, published in October 2022, demonstrated that the top five improvements identified were: improving footpaths, reducing street clutter, adding more planting, improving connections and accessibility to the River Tees and providing more seating and places to rest. The findings from the initial public consultation were analysed and used to shape and develop a package of concept designs for Yarm High Street.

Concept designs were presented for a second round of consultation in December 2022 for a period of 4 weeks. Consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public to share their views through in-person consultation events held in Yarm Library and an online consultation form.

The proposals included new paving along the High Street, new landscaping, seating areas and improved public spaces, de-cluttering of pavements, new cycle parking as well as potential enhancements to the River Tees and Snaiths Field Playground.

The results published in January 2023 showed that 69 per cent of respondents agreed that the locations of proposed works were in the most appropriate places on the High Street, 64 per cent of respondents agreed that the proposals identified the right mix

and type of improvements and 53 per cent of respondents said they would be accepting of the small loss of some parking spaces to deliver the scheme.

In response to public feedback received at this stage, which identified that enhancing spaces beyond Yarm High Street was a local priority, schemes to improve connections to and along the River Tees and upgrading the existing playground at Snaith's Field were developed.

The first phase of works focused on resurfacing the existing footpath and repairing root damage along True Lovers Walk, which were completed in September 2025, successfully improving access along walkways.

In response to feedback received, the scope of improvements to True Lovers Walk was broadened to consider two existing fishing pontoons located along the route.

A visual ground-level inspection of the pontoons was undertaken in autumn 2024, which found the pontoons to be in poor condition and their structural integrity compromised. Both structures were subsequently closed to the public.

Following the inspections an officer recommendation to remove the existing pontoons emerged, on the basis that their deteriorating condition, public safety concerns, ongoing maintenance and unknown structural defects below the water line made the pontoons a financial and legal liability to the Council. The cost for removing both pontoons was estimated at approximately £20,000.

Works to upgrade Snaith's Field playground were completed in October 2025. The installation of new play equipment, provision of new seating and resurfacing works to the existing footpath have made the location more accessible, which has been well received by users of the park.

In May 2025, proposals for a series of improvements to the public spaces on Yarm High Street, developed in response to the two periods of public consultation were presented.

Following publication of the scheme in May 2025 some concerns were raised regarding the appearance of the proposed planters and a revised design was undertaken to incorporate a more subtle and refined finish to the planter material, in keeping with the character of the High Street. Furthermore, a commitment was made at Cabinet in July 2025 to assess the cost of re-providing pontoons in the current locations.

Despite these refinements to the scheme, a variety of representations were made to the Council throughout summer and autumn of 2025 in opposition to the proposed scheme, culminating in an instruction to pause the planned start of works whilst further public engagement took place to make sure any interventions reflected local views.

Local people were invited to share their views on the proposed improvements to Yarm High Street over a 4-week period ending in early January 2026 under the banner of 'Yarm High Street - You Decide'. In-person engagement events were held in Yarm Library as well as an online form that was available on the Council's website.

The purpose of the engagement was to understand public views on whether the Council should proceed with the proposed scheme and from the 1,564 responses

received, results showed that 225 (14 per cent) respondents agreed that Yes - the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed whilst 1339 (86 per cent) people expressed a view that No – the Council should not proceed with the scheme as proposed.

A full summary of the engagement results was attached to the report.

As the recent engagement process produced an 86 per cent 'No' response as to whether the Council should proceed with the scheme as proposed, a decision was sought on next steps for use of the remaining approved budget.

As per the report to Cabinet in March 2023, the approved budget for the Yarm High Street element of the LUF programme was £4,600,000 to support interventions including a public realm scheme, redevelopment of Yarm Town Hall, relocation of public toilets, improvements to Snaiths Field and enhanced access to the River Tees.

The £4.6m was made up of £1m Council funding (from the previously approved £3million from the MTFP in 2020/21 for investment in interventions in Ingleby Barwick, Norton and Yarm), £3.5m LUF and £100k Yarm Town Council funding. To date c.£2.25m had been spent or committed leaving a balance of c.£2.35m made up of c.£950k Council co-funding and c.£1.4m LUF.

The Levelling Up Fund was administered opposite MHCLG under the Government's Regeneration Funding Simplification Programme – Local Regeneration Fund (LRF).

The Local Regeneration Fund simplified capital funding by consolidating the Levelling Up Fund, Town Deals, Future High Streets Fund and Pathfinders Pilot into a single funding pot. The LRF programme attempted to provide a greater flexibility and allow for more local control, enabling local authorities to make decisions about moving funding between projects, cancelling and creating new projects.

Taking the flexibilities afforded by the Local Regeneration Fund into account, alongside the remaining c.£2.35m budget, a range of uses for the funding could be considered. The make-up of the remaining budget (LUF and SBC funding) allowed for potentially more than one alternative use as the remaining budget could be considered as a single sum or separate budget strands by funding source.

To aid deliberation on potential next steps, a range of alternative courses of action are set out below. The options were by no means exhaustive, rather an attempt to categorise the potential alternatives within the existing LRF remit, options outside of the LRF remit and potential to split the funding by source.

Retain Funding in Yarm High Street / LUF Round 1 boundary

- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves (£950k)
- Develop alternative scheme on Yarm High Street.
- Develop alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area.
- Utilise LUF to offset borrowing (approved at Council in February 2025) c£950k to deliver Aviary, Stockton & Darlington Railway heritage feature and Central Area.
- Explore increased scope of interventions in PPMG beyond planned programme.
- Retain LUF money (c£1.4m) for alternative scheme in Yarm and Eaglescliffe area (including High Street)

Reallocate some or all funding from Yarm / LUF Round 1 boundary to interventions across the Borough

- Remove Council co-funding into Council reserves
- Hold LUF funding for a period of time as contingency across LRF programme.
- Identify and develop a new project to allocate some or all LUF funding.
- Allocate to an existing project elsewhere in the Borough

Following the commitment to revisit the principle of removing the fishing pontoons, made at Cabinet in July 2025, further evaluation, including a dive inspection, had since been undertaken to establish the cost and deliverability of removing and replacing the two existing wooden pontoons.

The estimated cost of removing the existing pontoons and replacing with a modern standard, similar sized structure using composite and steel materials to provide improved durability and a longer service life would be approximately £135,000.

A decision on replacing the pontoons would be subject to securing the necessary permits and consents along with a detailed risk assessment to ensure they meet the Council's statutory duties and are safe for public use.

Cabinet was asked to consider whether to proceed with the removal of the pontoons only, or the removal and installation of new pontoons.

Given the condition of the pontoons, in either scenario they must be removed which was estimated at £20,000. The cost of removal and installation of the pontoons, if instructed, would be deducted from the remaining allocated funding of £2.35m as set out in paragraph 28 of the report.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The findings of the public engagement undertaken in relation to the Yarm High Street public realm scheme be noted.
2. With regard to the £2.35m remaining funds from the allocated budget for Yarm High Street:-
  - a) The £950,000 of SBC co-funding be returned to support the Council's MTFP and financial position.
  - b) £950,000 of the remaining LUF funding be used to repay the borrowing associated with the additional expenditure at Preston Park Museum.
  - c) The remaining £450,000 LUF funding be committed in the Yarm area.
  - d) Delegated Authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to produce a shortlist of possible projects that could be achieved with the remaining budget of £450,000 and then engage with the residents and businesses of Yarm for their priorities. The list is to include the costs of each item on the list and to include the consideration of the replacement of the pontoons, to enable residents and businesses to consider the value for money and extent of the works available when providing their priorities.

## **CAB/102/25 Accelerating affordable housing delivery ('A quality home for all') - update**

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

A previous report presented to Cabinet on the 12 June 2025 outlined that the Council, like most local authorities continued to experience an increased demand for affordable housing (both sale and rent). This increase, set against a background of limited supply, was placing growing pressure on the Council's ability to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable adults and care leavers access independent accommodation.

To respond to these challenges, Cabinet agreed to adopt a 'Hybrid Delivery Model' to increase affordable housing supply whereby each potential development site (as it comes forward) was assessed against 3 delivery routes - Enabling, Direct Delivery or a Partnership Structure and approved 'in principle' to a small number of housing sites for affordable housing provision.

Following the assessment of the Raleigh Road site against the 3 delivery options, Cabinet was asked to approve the disposal of this site to North Star Housing Group to facilitate the delivery of social rented housing.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The direct award of the disposal of the Raleigh Road site to North Star Housing Group for the development of affordable social housing (as outlined in paragraphs 1 to 7 of the report) be approved.
2. The progress made on the other smaller sites identified in the 12th June 2025 Cabinet report, in relation to bringing each forward for affordable housing provision be noted (as outlined in paragraphs 8 to 10 of the report).
3. Following the conclusion of the competitive procurement exercise for the three smaller vacant sites (as detailed in paragraph 10 of the report) that the decision to proceed with a site disposal of each site to a Registered Provider for the provision of affordable housing, with a housing mix that reflects the Borough's identified housing needs be delegated to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration.

## **CAB/103/25 Revisions to the Council's Constitution**

Consideration was given to a report on revisions to the Council's Constitution.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. The wording within the Council's Constitution be amended to be clear and consistent that if there are over 1000 signatures on a petition, then referral to Council is automatic and that only final responses, not all correspondence, will be published.
2. The Council's Constitution specifies that electronic petitions are only accepted via the Modern.Gov platform to enable the Council to set the parameters of the petition (i.e. that the petition can only be signed by a person if they live, work or study in the Borough).

3. The Council's Constitution be amended to extend the composition of the Scrutiny Liaison Committee to include the Group Leader and Deputy Group Leader of each political party on the Council (where they are not already a member of the Forum in another role).

### **CAB/104/25 Council Motion - Flying the Union Flag**

Consideration was given to a report that requested Cabinet review the Council's Flag Flying Policy following approval of the Council motion to fly the Union Flag on Council premises and consideration by Members' Advisory Panel.

Members' Advisory Panel acknowledged the significant costs that would be involved with installing external flagpoles in new locations, including the site surveys that would be required even before a final decision was made. The Panel also noted that in several of the potential new locations, flags were already being flown in the vicinity by local Town Councils.

The Panel felt that a better solution to implementing the Council motion would be to fly the Union Flag internally in reception areas at the list of public facing buildings referred to in the appendix to the report, which included libraries and customer service centres across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the Council's existing flag flying policy be endorsed with an addendum that the Union Flag be flown internally in reception areas at public facing buildings (including libraries and customer service centres) across the Borough.

### **CAB/105/25 Council Motion - Livestreaming Meetings**

Consideration was given to a report that requested Cabinet approve proposals for the livestreaming and recording of meetings following the Council motion to livestream all Council meetings and consideration of implementation details by Members' Advisory Panel.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposals for the livestreaming and recording of meetings, and associated expenditure, set out in report and protocol be approved.
2. Meetings held outside of the Dunedin Council Chamber should not be livestreamed.
3. Officers look into the feasibility of holding Annual Council meetings in the Dunedin Council Chamber and consider bringing a further report to Members.
4. Photographs of past Mayors and Aldermen be displayed digitally on a television screen in the Civic Reception area and that this television to have the ability to display the livestreams of Council meetings as they are taking place.

### **CAB/106/25 Social Value Annual Report**

Consideration was given to a report that presented the Social Value Annual Report, detailing the progress achieved in advancing the Council's Social Value Policy during 2025 and outlining planned developments for 2026/27.

Cabinet approved the Social Value Policy in March 2023, and the annual report at Annex 1 of the report provided an update on the social value delivered during 2025. It included case studies illustrating the range and impact of outcomes achieved, along with statistical information on the associated financial proxy value.

Since last year's report, the Council's approach to social value continued to develop, including:

- The appointment of a dedicated Social Value Officer,
- A refresh of the Themes Outcomes Measures (TOMs) that are used to measure social value and the associated financial proxy values,
- Alignment of the refreshed TOMs to the Stockton on Tees Plan,
- Updates to the Social Value Calculators and dashboards used during the procurement process,
- Closer work with Catalyst to ensure the VCSE sector benefits from social value commitments,
- Initial work to explore how social value commitments made in Section 106 Agreements and Development Agreements can be captured and reported, and
- Networking with various community organisations/ VCSE organisations to understand how social value can help them
- Working both regionally and sub-regionally to share good practice and approaches to social value.

Work planned for 2026/27 included:

- Work with Catalyst to develop a unified Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Value Framework to ensure a consistent, strategic approach to allocating social value contributions and CSR-related financial donations from local businesses,
- Continue to develop processes to monitor and capture social value commitments made through Section 106 Agreements and Development Agreements,
- Identify other contract opportunities to include social value.
- Use social value case studies in press releases to demonstrate how suppliers, providers and contractors contribute to the borough through their social value commitments.

The next steps would be as follows:-

- Continue the development of the Council's approach to Social Value and Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Continue to monitor the financial proxy values of social value.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The Social Value Annual Report (Annex 1 of the report) be noted.
2. The work undertaken during 2025/26 and the planned work in 2026/27 be noted.

### **CAB/107/25 Annual Procurement Plan/Higher Value Contracts**

Consideration was given to a report on Annual Procurement Plan/Higher Value Contracts.

The report sought approval from Cabinet for the award of planned higher value contracts where the value exceeds the limit on officer delegated authority and which are either funded within the approved MTFP / Capital Programme or were subject to a bid for external funding.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contracts listed in Annex 1 of the report be approved.
2. Authority be given to the relevant Director or Assistant Director to make the specific contract award decision and any subsequent contract variation, annual inflationary uplifts (where allowed in the contract terms and conditions) and extension decision in accordance with the delegations listed in Annex 1 of the report.

### **CAB/108/25 Minutes of Various Bodies**

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

TSAB – 8 October 2025  
SSP – 26 November 2025  
TVCA Cabinet – 30 January 2026

RESOLVED that the above minutes be received.

### **CAB/109/25 Child Poverty (2025 update report)**

Consideration was given to a report on Child Poverty (2025 update report).

Appendix A of the report outlined the progress made by the Council and its partners during 2025 to alleviate child poverty across the Borough.

Following the recent publication of the Government's national child poverty strategy, 'Our Children, Our Future: Tackling Child Poverty' (December 2025) the report also highlighted examples of actions taken by the Council which support this national agenda.

The Stockton-on-Tees Child Poverty Network continued to meet quarterly, bringing together external partners, including Family Action, SDAIS and Moneywise, with Council service leads to discuss the key issues children and families living in poverty were experiencing across our Borough. This was a collaborative group that worked to find solutions to these issues and improve the lives of children and young people.

Appendix A of the report provided details of key achievements; however notable examples included:

- Delivery of the Free School Meals Auto-enrolment project, resulting in almost 400 children being registered and an increase of almost £500,000 in pupil premium.
- Implementation of a year-round offer for residents to obtain free pre-loved uniform from any of the borough's Family Hubs.

- 10,286 children/young people attended the borough's Holidays Are Fun Activity Programme (which provides healthy meals, enrichment activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families).
- Targeted work undertaken in North Thornaby as part of the wider Early Intervention and Prevention project.
- Direct support to families at key points in the year – for example, through the Back to School Campaign & the Second Dance Prom Project, helping to ease family financial pressures associated with children returning to school and the costs of prom season.

Next steps would include:-

- Using the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to deliver rapid, preventative, and targeted support to households, particularly families with children, at risk of financial crisis.
- Targeting eligible families with children to help them access the Warm Homes Discount scheme and signposting them to help maximise their incomes.
- Supporting primary schools with the rollout of free breakfast clubs.
- Promoting the changes to free school meal eligibility to schools, parents/carers and undertake the Council's third auto-enrolment project.
- Continuing to support young people and families to access free uniform and prom outfits.
- Providing targeted intervention and events to support families most in need.

RESOLVED that the report and actions taken to addressing and alleviating child poverty during 2025 be noted.

### **CAB/110/25 Procedure for admission of pupils to Primary & Secondary schools in September 2027**

Consideration was given to a report on the procedure for admission of pupils to Primary & Secondary schools in September 2027.

The report outlined the admission arrangements the Local Authority (LA) was proposing, for entry into both primary (Reception) and secondary (Year 7) schools in September 2027. To comply with legislation for admission in September 2027, the report included the co-ordinated timetable, the Published Admission Number (PAN) for all Primary and Secondary Schools for that year and the LA's proposed Admission Policy (Oversubscription Policy) for Community maintained and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools for entry in September 2027.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The proposed Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Secondary, Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, Academies and Free School (points 4-5 and Appendix 1 of the report) be agreed.

2. The proposed PANs for Primary and Secondary schools for September 2027 (points 6-8 and Appendix 2 of the report) be agreed.

3. The proposed Admission Policy for September 2027 (point 9-11 and Appendix 3 of the report) be agreed.

### **CAB/111/25 School Performance 2024 – 2025 for Vulnerable Pupils**

Consideration was given to a report on School Performance 2024 – 2025 for Vulnerable Pupils.

The report presented a summary analysis of vulnerable pupil performance in the academic year 2024-2025 for all key stages and all providers in the Borough. It was informed by the latest available data, some of which remained unvalidated and compared to national and regional averages where they existed. It included performance outcomes for:

1. Pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding.
2. Performance by gender.
3. Performance by ethnicity.
4. Children and Young People in Our Care.
5. Children with a Social Worker.
6. Children with Special Needs.
7. Children from Service Families.
8. Attendance and exclusion figures for Stockton.

Strong attainment outcomes for vulnerable pupils were achieved in Stockton-on-Tees despite significant underlying structural inequalities.

In interpreting the performance of vulnerable groups, it was important to acknowledge that the Borough continued to experience some of the most pronounced neighbourhood-level inequalities in the country, which was often masked by Borough-wide averages. These inequalities intersect with the wider system challenges highlighted through work on Early Intervention and Prevention (EIP), which identified an estimated 2,205 adults experiencing Severe and Multiple Disadvantage (SMD) locally each year.

Many of the vulnerabilities seen among children and young people such as suspensions, poor attendance, SEND, social care involvement and unstable housing were understood to be early indicators of future risk, underlining the critical importance of whole-family, place-based and early intervention approaches.

Together with partners, the Council was working to strengthen the collective system response by removing organisational boundaries, improving multiagency data sharing, aligning resources, and building a shared “One Voice” approach around prevention.

This strategic alignment ensured that work to improve educational outcomes was supported by wider efforts to address the root causes of inequality, stabilise families experiencing complex lives, and create the conditions for long-term positive change.

Key Headlines included:-

- Overall attainment for vulnerable groups shows positive direction of travel, with notable improvements for disadvantaged pupils, girls, non white pupils, and pupils with SEND.
- Stockton frequently outperforms national benchmarks across multiple groups and all key stages.
- Gender outcomes are strong, with both boys and girls performing well compared with national figures and holding high regional rankings.
- Children in Our Care achieve well, especially at EYFS and KS4, supported by strong partnership work from the Virtual School.
- Children with a Social Worker show improving trends in key areas including suspensions and attendance.
- SEND outcomes at KS2 and KS4 have strengthened, both for pupils with EHCPs and for those receiving SEN Support.
- Exclusions practice is increasingly effective, with no permanent exclusions in special schools and several exclusions prevented through early intervention and challenge.
- Attendance work is having measurable impact, with primary and special school attendance performing better than national/regional levels and secondary attendance improving. However, PRU attendance is a significant concern, with very high persistent and severe absence.
- Suspensions and attendance challenges continue for Children in Our Care and for Children with a Social Worker.
- Early Years outcomes for children with SEND remain below national, despite progress elsewhere.
- Permanent exclusions remain too high, especially in KS3, and numbers have increased slightly overall.
- Access to specialist services (e.g., EP and Speech & Language) remains a barrier for some groups.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **CAB/112/25 Stockton-on-Tees Best Start in Life Plan 2026-2031**

Consideration was given to a report on the Stockton-on-Tees Best Start in Life Plan 2026-2031.

The report provided an overview of the Stockton-on-Tees Best Start in Life Plan 2026–2031. The plan set out the Borough’s vision, strategic priorities and commitments for improving outcomes in the earliest years of a child’s life spanning pregnancy to age five.

As part of national policy direction, Stockton-on-Tees had been set ambitious targets by Government for the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of reception. By the 2027/28 academic year, at least 78.5% of children were expected to achieve a GLD, with a specific target of 63.1% for children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). For context, in 2024/25, 69.6% of children in Stockton-on-Tees achieved a GLD, compared with 53.8% of children eligible for FSM. The Best Start in Life plan aimed to align and mobilise collective resources to support progress toward these targets, which would serve as core metrics for monitoring performance and assessing impact over the lifetime of the plan.

The Stockton-on-Tees Best Start plan identified five strategic priorities:

- Foundations for a Healthy Childhood – supporting healthy routines, nutrition, immunisation, physical activity and home safety.
- Home Learning and Play – supporting parents to integrate play, talk and learning into daily life.
- Speech, Language and Communication – promoting early communication skills and streamlining pathways for additional support.
- High Quality Early Years Education – ensuring access to high quality provision, inclusive practice and sufficient childcare places.
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing – supporting secure parent child relationships, early identification of needs and access to appropriate programmes.

To support delivery, each priority had a named lead and a multi-agency working group responsible for driving actions forward and ensuring progress was monitored effectively. The development of the Best Start Family Hub a requirement of DfE Best Start funding was a central component in delivering the plan and had its own multi agency working group.

SBC Communications Team were leading on the design and formatting of the plan, which had been produced in accordance with the Council's policy and standards for the publication of strategies.

As part of the terms of the Best Start Grant, the plan must be published on the SBC website by 31st March 2026 in line with DfE requirements, and this included adherence to the national 'Best Start' branding.

An annual delivery plan would outline how partners across the local system would implement the priorities set out in this strategy, including the key milestones, actions and performance measures required to monitor progress and impact. The delivery plan would be overseen and coordinated by the Best Start Strategic Group with regular reporting to the Families First Partnership Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED that the Stockton-on-Tees Best Start in Life Plan 2026 – 2031 be approved.

### **CAB/113/25 Local Authority School Governor Appointment**

Consideration was given to a report on Local Authority School Governor Appointment.

There was a vacancy to be filled for a Local Authority governor at Bowesfield Primary School.

Cllr Sufi Mubeen was considered for the position.

Criteria:

- Knowledge of the local community
- Commitment to Education.

RESOLVED that Cllr Sufi Mubeen be appointed Local Authority governor for Bowesfield Primary School.

## **CAB/114/25 Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to a report on the Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS) 2022-32 Annual Monitoring Report.

Climate change poses a real threat to society and biodiversity. There were already increasing impacts of flooding, high winds, heat waves, significant wildfires and species collapse. To limit climate change there needed to be a reduction in carbon emissions building on the work already achieved.

Local authorities were increasingly expected to play a central role in responding to climate change but were often constrained by severe resource limitations. Given current financial pressures, the Council simply not able to take on the full breadth of climate related responsibilities that national policy sometimes assumes.

However, the reality was that significant and potentially dangerous changes in weather patterns were already locked in due to existing global emissions. These impacts more frequent extreme heat, flooding, coastal surges, and storm events would continue to intensify over the coming years.

As a local authority, the Council had a statutory and moral duty to protect residents, safeguard essential services, and maintain the conditions for local economic activity. This meant that, irrespective of the capacity to act on mitigation measures, the Council would inevitably be required to strengthen the resilience of the local infrastructure.

Therefore, the focus in the coming years must shift toward:

- Prioritising climate adaptation and resilience, recognising that these measures will be essential to keep people safe and services functioning.
- Investing in the robustness of critical systems—transport, energy, water, digital connectivity—even where funding is limited, by embedding resilience into every decision, project, and procurement opportunity.
- Advocating for the necessary resources, so that local authorities are properly equipped to meet the challenges that are already unfolding.

Climate change was no longer a distant threat it was a present and escalating risk. The primary responsibility was to ensure communities could withstand the impacts that were already inevitable.

Stockton Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy (ES&CRS), adopted in 2022 set out the direction needed and described the actions that would contribute to the achievement of net zero.

The Council had made significant progress within the resources available, achieving a steady decline in carbon emissions over a long period. However, substantial additional investment would be required in the coming years if the Council would remain on target for Net Zero by 2032.

Continued concentration on measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions from assets and fleet, were an urgent priority, alongside investing in solar energy generation and counterbalancing natural solutions.

RESOLVED that the annual monitoring report be noted.

**CAB/115/25 Resolution to exclude the public from the meeting for part of agenda item - Making New Public Space Protection Orders for Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre (2026-2029)**

RESOLVED that:-

1. To exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during the consideration of Pack 3 and the Exempt Appendix to the report on Making New Public Space Protection Orders for Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre 2026-2029 due to the likelihood that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information and

2. The information is exempt information because it is

- a. information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
- b. information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) or
- c. information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings under Paragraphs 2, 3 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972 and

3. The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**CAB/116/25 Making New Public Space Protection Orders for Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre (2026-2029)**

Consideration was given to a report on making new Public Space Protection Orders for Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre (2026-2029).

In Spring 2025, the Community Safety Select Committee published Scrutiny Review of Welcoming and Safe Town Centres, stating that as Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council redevelops its town centres, safe and welcoming spaces remain essential. The introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in 2023 for selected zones in Stockton and Norton was highlighted as a key step towards these goals. The Committee recommended evaluating the 2023 Orders, including their principles, implementation, and resourcing.

PSPOs help prevent anti-social behaviour (ASB) in public areas and were widely used across England and Wales. The existing Public Spaces Protection Order for both Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre would expire at midnight on 2 April 2026.

The report sought Cabinet approval to make new PSPOs for these areas for the period 2026–2029. In determining whether to make new Orders, Cabinet must be satisfied that the statutory conditions in section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 were met on the evidence presented. The making of a PSPO was a fresh statutory decision and there was no presumption of continuation when an Order expires.

In Stockton, proposed restrictions included failure to comply with a requirement not to consume alcohol or to surrender alcohol (commonly referred to as street drinking controls), begging, anti-social loitering, anti-social driving / vehicle use, public urination/defecation, dogs off-lead, and dog fouling. Requirements also mandate moving temporary structures, providing personal details to officers if breaching the Order or causing ASB, and leaving the area when directed. Norton's proposed conditions included street drinking controls, begging, ASB loitering, and anti-social vehicle use, with similar requirements for providing details and vacating the area when instructed.

The report offered Cabinet the context needed to decide on the next steps for the PSPOs in both Stockton Town Centre and Norton.

A substantial and diverse body of evidence had been gathered from frontline council services, local businesses, partner agencies, cultural and faith organisations, and the police. This material indicated that a range of behaviours including but not limited to street drinking, begging, anti-social loitering, intimidation, vehicle-related disorder, drug- and alcohol-related nuisance, urination and defecation in public spaces, temporary structures associated with ASB, and irresponsible dog control continue to occur within defined areas of Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre.

These behaviours were consistently reported across independent sources as having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of residents, businesses, staff, visitors and vulnerable groups, and were described as persistent, recurring, and unreasonable in their impact. Evidence highlighted obstruction and intimidation of the public, harm to business operation and customer confidence, degradation of the public realm, environmental health issues, and reduced feelings of safety particularly among families, older people and those using key transport routes or community facilities. Public consultation results further demonstrated strong community support for proportionate measures to address these issues.

It remained for Cabinet, as the statutory decision-maker, to consider this evidence in the round and determine whether it was satisfied on reasonable grounds that the legal tests in section 59 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 were met, and that the proposed restrictions were necessary and proportionate at this time

For transparency and to support Cabinet in applying the statutory tests in section 59, the evidence base had been organised into three Evidence Packs as follows:-

- Pack 1 contains representations from statutory consultees;
- Pack 2 contains evidence from relevant Council services; and
- Pack 3 contains representations from external consultees including businesses, community organisations and civic partners.

Cabinet had noted that Pack 3 contained sensitive and commercially confidential information relating to businesses and other organisations who have contributed their views and is therefore recommended for consideration as exempt under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report and the considerations relevant to the making of new Public Spaces Protection Orders for Stockton Town Centre and Norton Town Centre from 3 April 2026 be noted.
2. Having considered the evidence and applying the statutory tests in section 59 of the Anti social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Cabinet was satisfied on reasonable grounds that the legal conditions for making a new Public Spaces Protection Order were met and therefore approval was given to the making of the proposed Orders for (i) Stockton Town Centre (2026–2029) and (ii) Norton Town Centre (2026–2029).
3. Fixed penalty notice rate be set at £100.00 for breaches of the new Orders, consistent with current arrangements.
4. Delegate authority be given to the Director of Adults, Health & Wellbeing and the Director of Corporate Services to make such minor drafting, typographical, formatting, mapping, cross-referencing or other consequential amendments to the approved Orders as are necessary prior to making them, provided that such amendments do not alter the substance, scope, or effect of any prohibition, requirement, or restricted area approved by Cabinet.

REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

REPORT OF  
COMMUNITY SAFETY  
SELECT COMMITTEE

## CABINET DECISION

### Lead Cabinet Members

- Children and Young People – Councillor Clare Besford
- Access, Communities & Community Safety – Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE

## Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

### Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Community Safety Select Committee's review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse.

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

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2025-2026. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Community Safety Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

### Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) undertake a communications campaign (reflecting the 'keeping your child in mind' principle) around the impact of domestic abuse on children.
- 2) In collaboration with local schools, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Harbour introduce a school staff training programme on domestic abuse, its impact on children, and the support services available (including a plan to increase the uptake of domestic abuse training in primary schools).
- 3) Options be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings (hospitals and primary care).
- 4) All organisations improve their recording of details (including a child's age) of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) (note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026) and local support service, Harbour (even when domestic abuse is only one of several reasons for a referral being submitted).

- 5) In terms of domestic abuse-related training:
  - a) SBC introduces a mandatory course for all staff (and Elected Members) which includes content on identifying this form of abuse and how / where to report it.
  - b) Relevant partnerships with oversight of domestic abuse / safeguarding matters encourage organisations represented within these multi-agency arrangements to introduce mandatory courses for all staff, the content of which should reflect a tiered approach based on individual roles / responsibilities.
  - c) The Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) seek greater assurance around the uptake of such training within individual organisations (including early years providers) and how this is impacting upon practice.
- 6) Harbour strengthens the promotion of its existing offer within local primary care services (across all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the individual practices themselves).
- 7) Where appropriate, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG oversee a drive to increase awareness and utilisation of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) by frontline professionals across the local 'system' when domestic abuse is identified within a household.
- 8) SBC provides assurance to key partners and all Elected Members around the changes to its 'front door' to services for children and their families (*note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026*), including how existing partnership arrangements will be maintained / enhanced.
- 9) The Stockton-on-Tees DASG seek assurance that key local partners have 'voice of the child' strategies / mechanisms in place and that best practice principles in relation to capturing the child's voice are shared and continually reinforced (particularly with frontline officers attending households).
- 10) The Stockton-on-Tees DASG provide updates on the progress of actions associated with the local Domestic Abuse Strategy, highlighting any areas which are proving challenging and the reasons for this.
- 11) Suggested areas of future focus identified by contributors to this review be shared with, and subsequently considered by, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG and the HSSCP.
- 12) The findings and recommendations from the recently published thematic joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report on '*the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse*' be shared with all relevant local organisations.

## Detail

1. The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age, and this is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right. Statutory Guidance supporting the understanding of the definitions of 'domestic abuse' and 'personally connected' as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was released in 2022.

2. Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem, affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020-2021, the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three-quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.
3. Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. A variety of research and commentaries on this scrutiny topic have been previously published, including by renowned organisations such as Barnardo's, The Children's Society, and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).
4. In December 2023, Foundations (the national 'What Works Centre for Children & Families') reported figures which revealed that at least 827,000 children in England and Wales may have suffered domestic abuse by the end of 2023. Amid concerns that the numbers of children affected by domestic abuse had escalated, the organisation called for an urgent focus on testing the most promising approaches to strengthen support for children.
5. April 2025 saw the publication of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales's vision for transformation in the response to babies, children and young people subject to domestic abuse. 'Victims in their own right?' examined the current reaction to those who experienced domestic abuse at home or in their family across both the statutory and non-statutory response. Evidencing current gaps in provision, examples of good practice, and providing constructive solutions for a co-ordinated approach that made the improvements needed, the report drew on extensive engagement and comprehensive insights to support recommendations across seven key themes.
6. The main aims for this review were to understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, the extent of the issue across the Borough, and the ways in which those who experience this were identified (with specific attention on exploring how domestic abuse impacted children in their early years, and the extent of the lasting impact as they grew older). Furthermore, the review sought to articulate the current local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse (providing clarity for frontline professionals, families and children / young people), as well as explore opportunities for early intervention (focusing on services engaging with children / families with children in their early years) to protect children from the enduring impacts of domestic abuse.
7. The Committee took evidence from the SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing and SBC Children's Services directorates, the local Domestic Abuse Steering Group, Harbour, local NHS Trusts (regarding maternity, health visiting and CAMHS considerations), the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Primary Care Networks, Cleveland Police, the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP), and housing services (Thirteen and SBC Housing). A survey for the Borough's early years providers was also issued.

## Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

8. The recently published Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy stated that *'Domestic abuse overall is showing a downward trend; however, incidents involving children present in the household are beginning to rise'* (a claim which was supported by data published within HSSCP annual reports). From an early years perspective, Cleveland Police statistics demonstrated that there were 763 cases recorded of children aged 0-5 being present during a domestic abuse incident in Stockton in 2025. The Committee's recommendations aim to support efforts to raise awareness of domestic abuse and its impact on children, strengthen the identification, reporting and recording of related incidents, and make a positive difference to how young victims are supported in the future.

The Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) was introduced after the design and commissioning of the current service / contract – an assessment will need to be carried out ahead of any agreed changes to the existing offer being implemented.

## Corporate Parenting Implications

9. There are no direct implications in the report.

## Financial Implications

10. Committee recommendations on the introduction of a school staff training programme on domestic abuse and a mandatory course for all SBC staff (and Elected Members) may have resource implications, whilst provision of roles to maintain capacity across the system (e.g. hospital IDVA) would require funding. Progression of any suggested areas of future focus identified by contributors to this review, as well as responses to the recently published thematic joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report on *'the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse'* may also require financial considerations.

## Legal Implications

11. There are no direct implications in the report.

## Risk Assessment

12. The review 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

13. This review is relevant to children (including those in their early years) / young people within all Wards across the Borough.

## Background Papers

14. None.

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# Scrutiny Review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse

Community Safety Select Committee  
Final Report

March 2026

Community Safety Select Committee  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Dunedin House  
Columbia Drive  
Thornaby  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS17 6BJ

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# Select Committee – Membership

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Councillor Katie Weston (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Robert Cook  
Councillor John Coulson  
Councillor Jason French

Councillor Ray Godwin  
Councillor Shakeel Hussain  
Councillor Barbara Inman  
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## Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank the following people for contributing to its work:

- Councillor Norma Stephenson OBE (Cabinet Member for Access, Communities and Community Safety) – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)
- Councillor Carol Clark (Committee Substitute) – SBC
- Councillor Lynn Hall (Committee Substitute) – SBC
- Louise Hollick (Assistant Director – Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care) – SBC
- Mandy MacKinnon (Strategic Health & Wellbeing Manager) – SBC
- Majella McCarthy (Director of Children’s Services) – SBC; (Chair) – HSSCP
- Sarah Bowman-Abouna (Director of Public Health) – SBC; (Chair) – Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group)
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- Elizabeth Swanson (Director of Nursing) – North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust
- Gemma Sharpe (Community Team Manager (Stockton Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS))) – Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
- Alan O’Donoghue (Stockton District Commander) – Cleveland Police
- Matt Murphy-King (PVP Operations Superintendent – Prevention Command) – Cleveland Police
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- Leanne Stockton (Business Manager) – Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)
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- Primary Care Networks (PCNs) who provided their views on this scrutiny topic via the NENC ICB
- Early years providers who provided their views on this scrutiny topic via the Committee’s survey

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# Foreword

On behalf of the Community Safety Select Committee, we are pleased to present the final report and recommendations following our review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse.

Scrutiny often involves difficult conversations about situations and problems that are hard to solve, and this topic was no different. Domestic abuse, in its wide range of forms, is an all-too-prevalent scourge within households up and down the country, and children / young people who witness this can frequently become the forgotten victims. Our review aimed to examine this type of abuse from a child's perspective (with a specific focus on those in their early years), how experience of it impacted upon them and, crucially, how those affected by it within Stockton-on-Tees were identified. A further important element was to highlight the current local offer for supporting children / young people following incidents of domestic abuse, with the Committee also seeking to identify any gaps which could strengthen practice within individual organisations and across multi-agency arrangements.

A glance at the 'Acknowledgements' section of this report demonstrates the breadth of relevant parties when it comes to this scrutiny topic, emphasising widely accepted thinking that '*safeguarding is everyone's business*'. We would like to thank Council officers, the Scrutiny Officer, and all those organisations who contributed to this piece of work, and hope that our recommendations can make a positive difference to their ongoing efforts in identifying, reporting, and supporting those children and young people throughout the Borough who have been / are / will be affected by domestic abuse.



**Cllr Mrs Ann McCoy**

Chair  
Community Safety Select Committee



**Cllr Katie Weston**

Vice-Chair  
Community Safety Select Committee

# Original Brief

## Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028 priorities:

- *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.
- *Priority 2: Healthy & Resilient Communities:* 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 (Building safe and connected communities).

The outputs from this review will also contribute to the SBC *Powering Our Future* transformation review of 'Early Intervention and Prevention'.

## What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

In December 2023, Foundations (the national What Works Centre for Children & Families) reported figures which revealed that at least 827,000 children in England and Wales may have suffered domestic abuse by the end of 2023. Amid concerns that the numbers of children affected by domestic abuse had escalated, the organisation called for an urgent focus on testing the most promising approaches to strengthen support for children.

The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age, and this is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right.

Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem, affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020-2021, the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three-quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. In 2020-2021, services in Stockton-on-Tees reported that 17% of homeless presentations were related to domestic abuse and 20% of substance misuse service users had experienced domestic abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028 for Stockton-on-Tees highlights the importance of intervening early to minimise the impact of domestic abuse on children. As such, the main aims for this review will be to:

- Understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, the extent of this issue across the Borough, and the ways in which those who experience this are identified. In particular, explore how domestic abuse impacts children in their early years, and the extent of the lasting impact as they grow older.

- Articulate the current local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse, providing clarity for frontline professionals, families and children / young people.
- Explore opportunities for early intervention (focusing on those services engaging with children / families with children in their early years) to protect children from the enduring impacts of domestic abuse.

**The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:**

- When children experience domestic abuse in their early years, how does this then impact them throughout their lives (immediate and longer-term)? Are there variations in terms of a child's experience / impact of domestic abuse across different cultures?
- What local data exists in relation to children experiencing domestic abuse and / or the subsequent impact of this?
- How are children at risk of / experiencing domestic abuse identified locally? What are the reporting routes for professionals and how are these reinforced with staff?
- What is the Local Authority's offer for children affected by domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees? Has this evolved over time and is it effective? How are support services promoted?
- What is in place across local partners (particularly those engaging with children / families with children aged 0-5) to identify and mitigate the effects of domestic abuse on children in the Borough (including involvement in multi-agency arrangements)?
- How does the Council and its partners capture the voice of children themselves when considering / reflecting upon their service offer?
- Does the existing service offer from individual organisations contribute effectively to a whole 'system' approach to the provision of domestic abuse support for children?
- What evidence-based practice exists to tackle and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children who have been exposed to or experienced this in their early years?
- What national / regional / local developments will / are likely to impact upon this scrutiny topic and how will this affect services?

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and / or transformation:**

This review will seek to make recommendations which contribute to the provision of an effective multi-agency approach towards supporting children and young people who experience domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees.

With a focus on early intervention, reducing the impact of domestic abuse on individuals may reduce the need (demand) for services. This review will contribute to greater understanding of interventions and approaches which are effective at protecting children and young people from harm. The review will also identify where services and practice can be improved.

# 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Community Safety Select Committee's scrutiny review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse.
- 1.2. The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age, and this is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right. [Statutory Guidance](#) supporting the understanding of the definitions of 'domestic abuse' and 'personally connected' as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was released in 2022.
- 1.3. Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem, affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020-2021, the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three-quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.
- 1.4. Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. A variety of research and commentaries on this scrutiny topic have been previously published, including by renowned organisations such as [Barnardo's](#), [The Children's Society](#), and the [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](#).
- 1.5. In December 2023, [Foundations](#) (the national 'What Works Centre for Children & Families') reported figures which revealed that at least 827,000 children in England and Wales may have suffered domestic abuse by the end of 2023. Amid concerns that the numbers of children affected by domestic abuse had escalated, the organisation called for an urgent focus on testing the most promising approaches to strengthen support for children.
- 1.6. April 2025 saw the publication of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales's vision for transformation in the response to babies, children and young people subject to domestic abuse. '[Victims in their own right?](#)' examined the current reaction to those who experienced domestic abuse at home or in their family across both the statutory and non-statutory response. Evidencing current gaps in provision, examples of good practice, and providing constructive solutions for a co-ordinated approach that made the improvements needed, the report drew on extensive engagement and comprehensive insights to support recommendations across seven key themes.
- 1.7. The main aims for this review were to understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, the extent of the issue across the Borough, and the ways in which those who experience this were identified (with specific attention on exploring how domestic abuse impacted children in their early years, and the extent of the lasting impact as they grew older). Furthermore, the review sought to articulate the current local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse (providing clarity for frontline professionals, families and children / young people), as well as explore opportunities for early intervention (focusing on services engaging with children / families with children in their early years) to protect children from the enduring impacts of domestic abuse.

- 1.8. The Committee found that the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 had heralded a significant change in the law that led to children being recognised as victims in their own right if they saw, heard or were exposed to domestic abuse (defined as psychological, physical, sexual, financial and / or economic, emotional, and controlling and / or coercive behaviour, where the people involved were aged 16 or over and were or had been personally connected to each other (including relatives and intimate relationships)). Other relevant legislation / guidance outlined the expectations on organisations, both individually and in partnership with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 1.9. Extensive information exists on both the immediate impact and the enduring and chronic effects of domestic abuse on children, and this was reinforced by several of the contributors to this review. The Committee acknowledge the wide range of physical and mental ramifications across different phases of a child's development, factors which underline the severity of the issue and the way in which it causes those experiencing such abuse problems in the present, as well as likely challenges and obstacles for them in the future. Stronger public communication of this impact may play a part in making those over 16 consider the effects of their actions / potential actions when children are in the household.
- 1.10. Councils have a number of obligations around domestic abuse, including the provision of safe accommodation, working with organisations that represent the voice of victim-survivors, and leading on a domestic abuse partnership (involving the development and implementation of an associated strategy). The Local Authority also offers a range of early help support, with children's services undertaking required statutory interventions in relation to safeguarding / child protection and other associated planning which involves, in part, child protection investigations, home visits, observations of the child with parent(s), and referrals to support services. Whilst some of this work is conducted on a multi-agency partnership basis, from a housing perspective, the Committee note that SBC has limited direct working with social housing providers regarding domestic abuse considerations.
- 1.11. Commissioned by SBC as the local domestic abuse support service, Harbour highlighted that, whilst progress had been made, there was work to do around this scrutiny topic, specifically in terms of educating professionals and the public (especially schools). Of particular interest to the Committee was the use of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) within health settings, roles which were reportedly much-valued and had made a significant difference in assisting staff with this challenging issue, as well as facilitating safe disclosure of abuse from victim-survivors and signposting them / enabling access to available support. Although future funding for IDVAs is uncertain, it is clear that these arrangements should be maintained and indeed built upon where possible.
- 1.12. Given the focus on early years, the Committee sought, and was pleased to receive, assurance from several local organisations within the health sector around their role and actions in relation to this scrutiny topic – this included maternity, health visiting, and child mental health services. The Committee also welcomed the importance placed on domestic abuse by the overarching NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), as well as its involvement in local multi-agency partnerships, though heard that three of the four Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within the Borough were unaware of the local GP IDVA arrangement (with all four requesting better promotion of the Harbour offer within practices). Cleveland Police was a key contributor to this review and highlighted its central role and responsibilities on this issue (including co-location within the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) to improve working relationships and the timeliness of responses). Mindful of the forthcoming changes to the SBC 'front door' arrangements, it is vital that established relationships with partners are maintained to ensure robust safeguarding of children.

- 1.13. Two important partnerships provided evidence of work undertaken on this issue. The local Domestic Abuse Steering Group involves a range of partners and is responsible for delivering 'system' outcomes around domestic abuse – the current Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028 and its associated actions being key to this endeavour. Backing-up Harbour's view that further work was required within schools, the Committee encourage a focus on increasing the uptake of domestic abuse training within primary schools (which in September 2025 had seen only 10% of these settings partake). Separately, the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) has responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and involves multiple statutory and non-statutory partners. Whilst the Committee expressed concern about the lack of an explicit HSSCP focus on domestic abuse in recent years, it received assurance that this topic was frequently considered as part of the partnership's work (e.g. a recent multi-agency audit on this theme).
- 1.14. The Committee heard that there were 5,225 recorded 'incidents' of domestic abuse across the Borough and 3,907 recorded domestic abuse 'crimes' during 2023-2024. For this same period, 1,010 contacts into SBC Children's Services had domestic abuse listed as the reason for contact, with 25% of referrals made to SBC Children's Services over this period being domestic abuse-related. The recently published Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy stated that *'Domestic abuse overall is showing a downward trend; however, incidents involving children present in the household are beginning to rise'*, a claim which was supported by data published within HSSCP annual reports. From an early years perspective, Cleveland Police statistics demonstrated that there were 763 cases recorded of children aged 0-5 being present during a domestic abuse incident in Stockton in 2025.
- 1.15. This review had a strong emphasis on seeking assurance around identifying and reporting cases where children had experienced domestic abuse, and all contributors provided details on how this was carried out and how staff were supported to recognise signs and act on them. Importantly, individual organisations not only reflected on their own work to raise awareness of this form of abuse and promote reporting routes, but also acknowledged collective efforts around this scrutiny topic through their involvement in multi-agency arrangements. However, whilst the Committee was often given assurance on the provision of training for staff, little data was submitted on training uptake and the extent to which this was being repeated / reinforced. Similarly, the Committee found that some organisations did not appear to record domestic abuse-related referrals that they had made, making it difficult to cross-reference this against the work coming into the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) and local support service, Harbour, or establish trends within specific provision.
- 1.16. Again, mindful of this review's emphasis on the 0-5 age-range, the Borough's early years providers (e.g. nurseries / childminders) were asked to provide assurance on the identification and reporting of children who were, or were at risk of, being affected by domestic abuse within their household. Whilst the response rate to the Committee's survey was limited, those providers who did submit views demonstrated a good understanding of this issue, though also noted concerns regarding hidden abuse (particularly involving those who did not fit the stereotype of a family affected) and an absence of guidance / communications from the Council and / or other local organisations to assist in identifying / supporting children who had experienced domestic abuse. There was a clear call for an increased training offer for this sector.
- 1.17. Principally reflected through the ongoing work of Harbour, the Committee praised the involvement of local children and young people in the nationally significant 'Tell Nicole' (the Domestic Abuse Commissioner) project which captured the voice of individuals affected by domestic abuse. As recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are victims in their own right if they see or hear domestic abuse, and those charged with supporting them have a duty to understand their experiences and seek their views in order to shape effective service provision.

- 1.18. There was broad positivity around the work of local partnerships when it came to the issue of domestic abuse, a feeling echoed by an annual assurance report from the Domestic Abuse Steering Group in September 2025 which, as stated by HSSCP, provided strong confidence regarding the effectiveness of arrangements, demonstrating that agencies from across the system were working to prevent, intervene early, and respond to domestic abuse. This review indicated sound buy-in and recognition of responsibility from all relevant local agencies, as well as an appreciation that working together was the best way to safeguard children.
- 1.19. Contributors were asked to identify areas for future focus in relation to this scrutiny topic, and a range of subsequent suggestions are included in the findings of this report – these should be considered by the local domestic abuse / safeguarding children partnerships. Additionally, the findings from six joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) carried out between October 2024 and June 2025 (looking at how local partnerships and services responded to children who were at risk of, or who had been victims of, domestic abuse) were published by the Government at the end of the Committee’s evidence-gathering phase – key messages from these also need to be disseminated to all relevant local agencies.
- 1.20. This was a complex topic to review about an issue that is multifaceted. Whilst it is not within the gift of the Committee to prevent this type of abuse occurring, the review has allowed a spotlight to be shone on how aware local services are of this issue, how they respond to any cases they identify, and how they work together to raise awareness and react to domestic abuse across the Borough. Addressing the causes of domestic abuse is a deep-rooted challenge for society in general, but it remains incumbent on organisations and their staff to be vigilant, appropriately trained, and suitably responsive to this all too prevalent issue.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) **The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) undertake a communications campaign (reflecting the ‘keeping your child in mind’ principle) around the impact of domestic abuse on children.**
- 2) **In collaboration with local schools, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Harbour introduce a school staff training programme on domestic abuse, its impact on children, and the support services available (including a plan to increase the uptake of domestic abuse training in primary schools).**
- 3) **Options be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings (hospitals and primary care).**
- 4) **All organisations improve their recording of details (including a child’s age) of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children’s Hub (CHUB) (*note: to be known as the ‘Family Help Point’ from 1 April 2026*) and local support service, Harbour (even when domestic abuse is only one of several reasons for a referral being submitted).**

*(continued overleaf...)*

## **Recommendations (continued)**

The Committee recommend that:

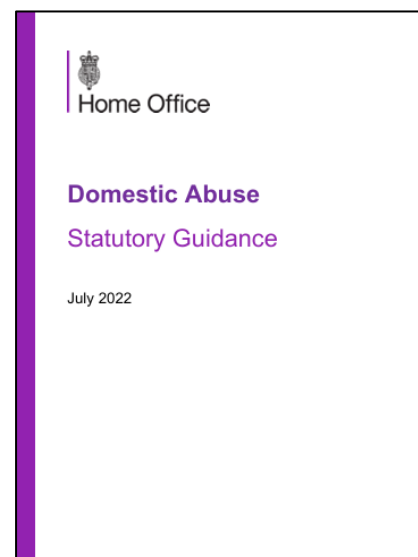
- 5) **In terms of domestic abuse-related training:**
  - a) **SBC introduces a mandatory course for all staff (and Elected Members) which includes content on identifying this form of abuse and how / where to report it.**
  - b) **Relevant partnerships with oversight of domestic abuse / safeguarding matters encourage organisations represented within these multi-agency arrangements to introduce mandatory courses for all staff, the content of which should reflect a tiered approach based on individual roles / responsibilities.**
  - c) **The Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) seek greater assurance around the uptake of such training within individual organisations (including early years providers) and how this is impacting upon practice.**
- 6) **Harbour strengthens the promotion of its existing offer within local primary care services (across all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the individual practices themselves).**
- 7) **Where appropriate, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG oversee a drive to increase awareness and utilisation of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) by frontline professionals across the local 'system' when domestic abuse is identified within a household.**
- 8) **SBC provides assurance to key partners and all Elected Members around the changes to its 'front door' to services for children and their families (*note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026*), including how existing partnership arrangements will be maintained / enhanced.**
- 9) **The Stockton-on-Tees DASG seek assurance that key local partners have 'voice of the child' strategies / mechanisms in place and that best practice principles in relation to capturing the child's voice are shared and continually reinforced (particularly with frontline officers attending households).**
- 10) **The Stockton-on-Tees DASG provide updates on the progress of actions associated with the local Domestic Abuse Strategy, highlighting any areas which are proving challenging and the reasons for this.**
- 11) **Suggested areas of future focus identified by contributors to this review be shared with, and subsequently considered by, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG and the HSSCP.**
- 12) **The findings and recommendations from the recently published thematic joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report on '*the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse*' be shared with all relevant local organisations.**

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Community Safety Select Committee's scrutiny review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse.
- 2.2. The main aims for this review were to understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, the extent of the issue across the Borough, and the ways in which those who experience this were identified (with specific attention on exploring how domestic abuse impacted children in their early years, and the extent of the lasting impact as they grew older). Furthermore, the review sought to articulate the current local offer for children and young people affected by domestic abuse (providing clarity for frontline professionals, families and children / young people), as well as explore opportunities for early intervention (focusing on services engaging with children / families with children in their early years) to protect children from the enduring impacts of domestic abuse.
- 2.3. The Committee identified the following key lines of enquiry:
  - When children experience domestic abuse in their early years, how does this then impact them throughout their lives (immediate and longer-term)? Are there variations in terms of a child's experience / impact of domestic abuse across different cultures?
  - What local data exists in relation to children experiencing domestic abuse and / or the subsequent impact of this?
  - How are children at risk of / experiencing domestic abuse identified locally? What are the reporting routes for professionals and how are these reinforced with staff?
  - What is the Local Authority's offer for children affected by domestic abuse in Stockton-on-Tees? Has this evolved over time and is it effective? How are support services promoted?
  - What is in place across local partners (particularly those engaging with children / families with children aged 0-5) to identify and mitigate the effects of domestic abuse on children in the Borough (including involvement in multi-agency arrangements)?
  - How does the Council and its partners capture the voice of children themselves when considering / reflecting upon their service offer?
  - Does the existing service offer from individual organisations contribute effectively to a whole 'system' approach to the provision of domestic abuse support for children?
  - What evidence-based practice exists to tackle and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children who have been exposed to or experienced this in their early years?
  - What national / regional / local developments will / are likely to impact upon this scrutiny topic and how will this affect services?
- 2.4. The Committee took evidence from the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Adults, Health and Wellbeing and SBC Children's Services directorates, the local Domestic Abuse Steering Group, Harbour, local NHS Trusts (regarding maternity, health visiting and mental health considerations), the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Primary Care Networks, Cleveland Police, the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership, and housing services (Thirteen Housing Group and SBC Housing Services). A survey for the Borough's early years providers was also issued.

## 3.0 Background

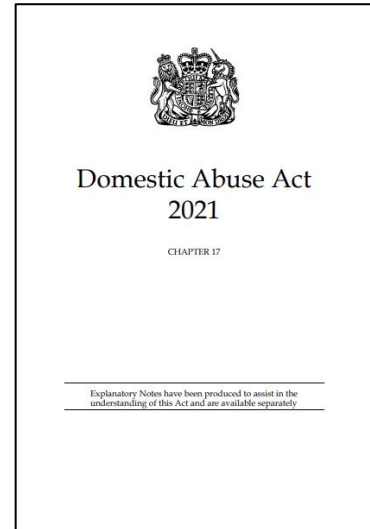
- 3.1 The impact of domestic abuse is felt by children regardless of their age, and this is now recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Children exposed to domestic abuse or experiencing domestic abuse in their own relationships are regarded as victim-survivors in their own right. [Statutory Guidance](#) supporting the understanding of the definitions of 'domestic abuse' and 'personally connected' as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was released in 2022.
- 3.2 Domestic abuse can seriously affect families and the physical, mental and emotional health, wellbeing and development of children and young people. Children and young people can develop emotional, behavioural and developmental issues such as anxiety, challenging and aggressive behaviour or withdrawal, delayed speech, language and communication and low self-esteem, affecting their ability to form healthy relationships and educational attainment. In 2020-2021, the local domestic abuse service found that children were exposed to three-quarters of domestic abuse incidents, whilst a third of referrals to Children's Services were related to domestic abuse.
- 3.3 Domestic abuse can be experienced by anyone and disproportionately affects children and young people. Domestic abuse can be one of the factors resulting in child exploitation and can contribute and exacerbate multiple disadvantage. A variety of research and commentaries on this scrutiny topic have been previously published, including by renowned organisations such as [Barnardo's](#), [The Children's Society](#), and the [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](#).
- 3.4 In December 2023, [Foundations](#) (the national 'What Works Centre for Children & Families') reported figures which revealed that at least 827,000 children in England and Wales may have suffered domestic abuse by the end of 2023. Amid concerns that the numbers of children affected by domestic abuse had escalated, the organisation called for an urgent focus on testing the most promising approaches to strengthen support for children.
- 3.5 April 2025 saw the publication of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales's vision for transformation in the response to babies, children and young people subject to domestic abuse. '[Victims in their own right?](#)' examined the current reaction to those who experienced domestic abuse at home or in their family across both the statutory and non-statutory response. Evidencing current gaps in provision, examples of good practice, and providing constructive solutions for a co-ordinated approach that made the improvements needed, the report drew on extensive engagement and comprehensive insights to support recommendations across seven key themes.
- 3.6 From a Council perspective, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman had previously issued '[Learning to improve council services for domestic abuse victims](#)' in response to the additional powers and duties created by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Locally, the Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028 highlighted the importance of intervening early to minimise the impact of domestic abuse on children.
- 3.7 In related matters, the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Children and Young People Select Committee conducted a '[Scrutiny Review of Domestic Abuse and its Impact on Children](#)' during 2019-2020.



# 4.0 Findings

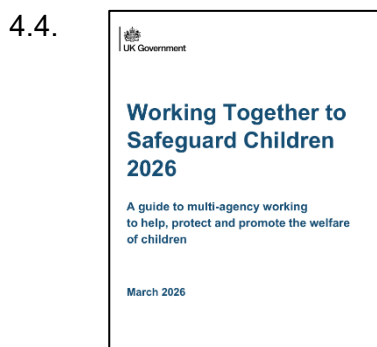
## Definitions and legislative considerations

4.1. The review’s first evidence-gathering session in June 2025 saw Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) departments reference existing legislation relevant to this scrutiny topic. **SBC Public Health** highlighted the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) which stated that domestic abuse involved any single incident or pattern of conduct where someone’s behaviour towards another was abusive, and where the people involved were aged 16 or over and were or had been personally connected to each other (including relatives and intimate relationships). The different types of abuse comprised psychological, physical, sexual, financial and / or economic, emotional, and controlling and / or coercive behaviour. A significant change in the law had led to children being recognised as victims in their own right if they saw or heard domestic abuse. It was also important to distinguish that abusive behaviour directed at those aged 16 or over was deemed ‘domestic abuse’ but was categorised as ‘child abuse’ when directed at those under 16.



4.2. **SBC Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care** personnel drew attention to the legal recognition of children as victims within Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, as well as the requirements under the [Children Act 1989](#) which placed a duty on Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need (i.e. a child requiring support and protection because their health or development was likely to be significantly impaired without such intervention, or because they had a disability).

4.3. The Children Act 1989 included an escalating scale of obligations, from the provision of services (Section 17), the need to investigate if a child was suspected to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm due to domestic abuse (Section 47), and the provision of accommodation for children in need in specific circumstances (Section 20), through to a Care Order (a legal order made by a family court under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, this placed a child under the care of a Local Authority, giving them shared parental responsibility with the child’s parents).



4.4. The [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2018, updated in 2020, 2023 and 2026) guidance was statutory and set out how all organisations and agencies (not just social care and the police) should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in England.

Key principles included a child-centred approach, a whole-family focus, and multi-agency collaboration, with specific regard to domestic abuse (stating that practitioners should continue to expand their understanding of domestic abuse and the impact it had on children).

4.5. Guidance clarified that the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) did not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. Partners should attend multi-agency meetings to share information, participate in safeguarding planning, and contribute to assessments and support plans.

- 4.6. From a health perspective, in October 2025, the [NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board \(NENC ICB\)](#) noted the [Health and Care Act 2022](#) which required ICBs to develop five-year strategic plans addressing needs of domestic abuse victims, including children. As commissioners of care, ICBs must actively safeguard vulnerable individuals by integrating healthcare services focused on domestic and sexual abuse victims. Requirements were met through the appointment of executive leads to ensure safeguarding responsibilities were prioritised at the highest governance level, compliance with statutory guidance ('Working Together to Safeguard Children') to co-ordinate multi-agency protection efforts, and active participation in local partnerships to ensure adherence to safeguarding standards across services. Furthermore, healthcare services must be safe and responsive to children's needs, promoting their welfare and protection, and the ICB had to ensure that services were aware of their own duties of care and that these were reflected within a service specification.
- 4.7. ICBs must commission trauma-informed services which centre on supporting children affected by domestic abuse, and domestic abuse considerations should be integrated into strategic planning and needs assessments by ICBs. Services must identify and respond to domestic abuse early, particularly in primary care, maternity, and emergency departments. ICBs must also ensure accessible and effective referral pathways for children and families affected by domestic abuse.
- 4.8. Updated in 2024 to reflect the role of ICBs in safeguarding children and adults, NHS England's [Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework \(SAAF\)](#) emphasised multi-agency collaboration, training and localised safeguarding leadership. It also supported implementation of Children's Social Care reforms and revised 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance.

### Impact of domestic abuse on children

*'Children and young people of different ages may respond in different ways to domestic abuse, depending on their stage of development. Babies and young children may be particularly vulnerable when living with domestic abuse, with protective factors often minimal for this age group (unable to seek help or remove themselves from danger, often 'out of sight' of regular contact with professionals, dependent on others and may not be able to recognise abusive behaviour). Babies experiencing the effects of domestic abuse may be more likely to have difficulty sleeping, have higher levels of excess crying and disrupted attachment. Children of pre-school age tend to show the most behavioural disturbance such as bed wetting, sleep disturbances and eating difficulties and are particularly vulnerable to blaming themselves for the adult violence. Older children may be more likely to show the effects of the disruption in their lives through under performance at school, poorly developed social networks, self-harm, running away and engagement in anti-social behaviour.'*

Home Office: Domestic Abuse – Statutory Guidance (Jul 22)

- 4.9. Reinforcing several elements contained within chapter 4 (Impact of Domestic Abuse) of the Domestic Abuse [Statutory Guidance](#) issued by the Home Office in July 2022, **SBC Public Health** outlined a range of potential consequences following experiences of domestic abuse, from fear, anxiety and depression, through to suicide. Specific impacts during pregnancy were noted (it was estimated that 30% of domestic abuse began in pregnancy), as were the effects throughout different child phases (infants, toddlers, primary school age) – see table overleaf.

#### The impact of domestic abuse

- Fear, anxiety, depression, eating disorders
- Loneliness and isolation, withdrawn
- Physical injuries, untreated injuries
- Sleep, ability to function
- Sexual health, urinary tract infections
- Post traumatic stress disorder / enduring trauma
- Ability to work, disruption, absence
- Financial hardship
- Homelessness
- Substance misuse
- Severe and multiple disadvantage – interconnecting issues: complex lives
- Suicide

The Impact of Domestic Abuse			
Pregnancy	Infants	Toddlers	Primary School Age
<p>Incidence is likely to be higher due to under-reporting</p> <p>Suicide leading cause of maternal death; 43% of whom had reported experiencing domestic abuse</p> <p>Stress and cortisol, state of alert</p> <p>Foetal trauma, death, low birth weight, premature birth</p> <p>Brain development, brain function, emotional regulation</p>	<p>Under 12 months highest risk of serious incidents or homicide</p> <p>Risks to attachment with parent as protector</p> <p>Deliberate disruption to mother-child relationship</p> <p>Impact on child development (trust, self-regulation)</p>	<p>Brain development</p> <p>Cognitive and sensory growth</p> <p>Sleep, separation anxiety, fear when alone</p>	<p>Readiness for school</p> <p>'Behavioural problems'</p> <p>Toileting</p> <p>Eating</p> <p>Social interactions</p>

- 4.10. It was also stated that domestic abuse was present in 52% of child deaths, and that 50% of children accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) were victim-survivors of domestic abuse.
- 4.11. The Committee felt it would be useful to understand how well self-harm was investigated / identified as this could sometimes be a symptom which remained hidden (it was subsequently noted that Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEVV) was included on the list of anticipated contributors to this review). Members were also keen to unpick the statistic that 50% of children in CAMHS were victim-survivors of domestic abuse.
- 4.12. Reflections on the effects of exposure led Members to query if any information was available on the likelihood of a child going on to become a perpetrator if they themselves had experienced domestic abuse in their formative years. The Committee also recognised the need to understand the causes of domestic abuse as well as its subsequent impact.
- 4.13. Members spoke of their personal involvement in supporting those who had been abused, noting that women were often reluctant to seek help until their child / children became affected, and were also liable to return to their partner despite being abused by them.
- 4.14. [Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust \(TEVV\)](#) representatives working within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) added that children who experienced domestic abuse, whether directly or by witnessing it, faced significant and often long-lasting mental health challenges – this included emotional and psychological effects (e.g. anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)), developmental delay, relationship and behavioural difficulties, and long-term mental health complications associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- 4.15. Further recognition of the impact of domestic abuse on children had been previously published by [The For Baby's Sake Trust](#) (the first programme for expectant parents that took a whole-family approach, starting in pregnancy and dealing with the entire cycle and history of domestic abuse) and [Freeva](#) ('free from violence and abuse' – an organisation which empowered and supported those who were experiencing, or had experienced, domestic and sexual violence / abuse).

### Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)

<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/Domestic-abuse-support>

- 4.16. Councils were required to undertake a range of tasks in relation to the issue of domestic abuse, with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requiring the provision of safe accommodation (refuges, dispersed properties, sanctuary support (known locally as 'Safe at Home')) which was facilitated via the production of a safe accommodation needs assessment and subsequent strategy to influence commissioning. Further key Local Authority obligations involved leading on a domestic abuse partnership with other organisations (in Stockton-on-Tees, this was done via the Domestic Abuse Steering Group), working with organisations that could represent the voice of victim-survivors (Harbour fulfilled this role locally), allocating the role of a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator, and responding to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales.
- 4.17. SBC commissioned Harbour as the local domestic abuse support service whose offer included a GP Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), a children's team and a Child IDVA (to ensure the voice of the child was heard), and the provision of safe accommodation. Harbour and SBC Children's Services worked together to jointly plan support and develop the workforce.
- 4.18. The Committee asked how much of the Public Health budget was spent on local organisations to provide support in relation to domestic abuse. SBC officers confirmed that the annual spend was around £500,000 which was part-funded via Public Health and 'safe accommodation' grants.

### *SBC Early Help, Safeguarding and Children in Our Care*

- 4.19. In terms of early help, a number of options existed locally to support families with children in the early stages of their lives – this included:
- **the commissioned service, Family Action:** outreach volunteers providing community support (e.g. food parcels, signposting to other services)
  - **four Family Hubs across the Borough:** offering a range of parental support, group sessions and programmes – engagement workers were also in place to encourage access
  - **the Family Solutions Teams:** senior family workers providing 1:1 help to develop plans, visit homes, and work directly with children
  - **the SBC Project and Interventions Service:** family group conferencing and therapeutic support, featuring an established model which identified extended family / friends / distant relatives to allow the family unit to develop its own support plan.
- 4.20. As part of the current support offer, the Family Hub programmes included an element on 'nurturing' which covered the emotional wellbeing of the family, communicating / negotiating with a child, and how to keep a child safe and supported. The 'keeping your child in mind' principle was also highlighted – this aimed to give parents a better understanding of their own behaviour and the behaviour towards their partner, and the impact this could have on their child / children.
- 4.21. Further to the earlier section around legislative considerations, potential involvement of social workers was outlined which included children and families assessments (completed within 45 days), Child in Need plans, Child Protection plans (under Section 47 requirements), Pre-Proceedings plans under Public Law Outline (PLO), and Child in Our Care (CIOC) planning. Interventions for any of these situations would include referrals to Harbour, direct work with the child (obtaining their 'voice' if old enough), home visits, observations of the child with parent(s), parenting work, assessments, and referrals for other interventions such as substance misuse or mental health (often reflecting case complexity). Child in Need and Child Protection planning involved regular multi-agency partnership meetings.

- 4.22. Regarding social work interventions, the Committee asked what the timescales were in relation to the Section 47 duty and what happened to the child during this process. SBC officers stated that there was a statutory timeframe of 15 days to complete an investigation and decide if a child protection conference was required (though this was often determined within 15 days). Any investigation involved seeing the child by themselves and was a joint operation with the police. A family and child safety plan would be created and followed during this process.
- 4.23. Members drew attention to those families who were more transient and queried how organisations / agencies monitored those who did not remain in one place for very long. SBC officers provided assurance that if a family / child moved into the Borough from a neighbouring Local Authority, they would 'transfer in' (SBC would take responsibility for any existing plan). However, it was acknowledged that the Council may initially be unaware of some families / children who arrived into the locality from other areas.

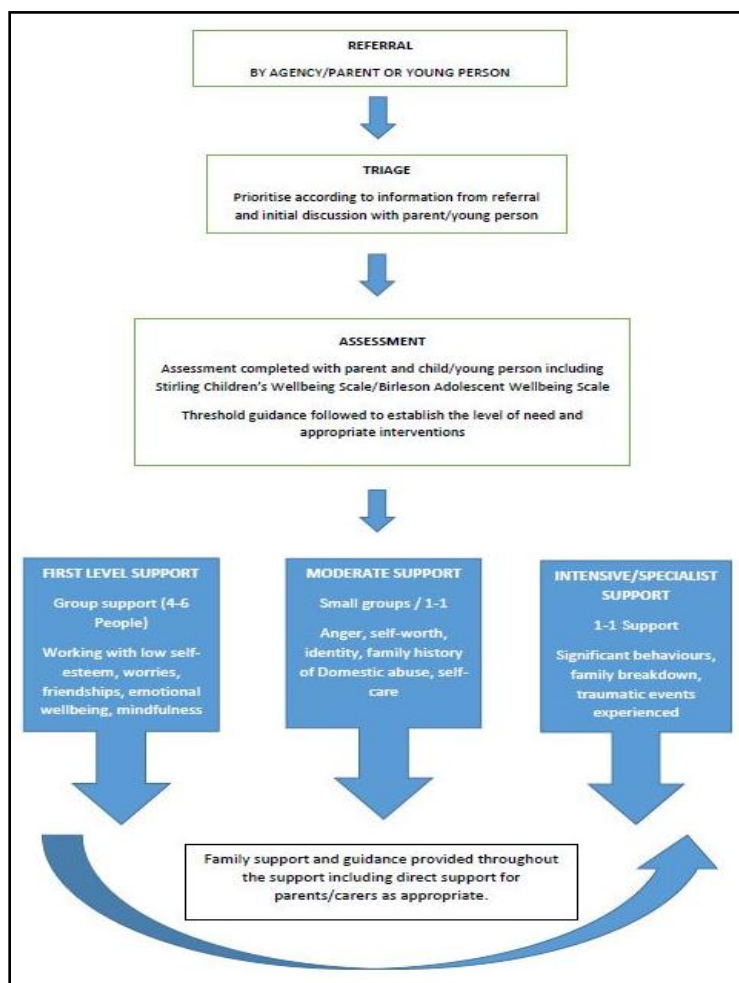
### *SBC Housing Services*

- 4.24. The SBC Homelessness Service had direct contact with, and provided support to, individuals who were homeless because of domestic abuse, and / or supported individuals who had experienced domestic abuse. From a lettings and nominations perspective, Tees Valley Home Finder (TVHF) policy gave priority to those households fleeing domestic abuse (Thirteen Housing Group tenants were awarded a priority banding with TVHF). The wider SBC Housing Service also had officers visiting residents in their homes (including SBC Private Sector Housing and Disabled Facilities Grants Teams).
- 4.25. Any person who was offered short-term housing-related accommodation and who had disclosed either fleeing or experiencing domestic abuse was offered safety planning from a specialised Harbour worker (who worked within the SBC Homelessness Service) that was funded via Public Health contracts. SBC Public Health and the SBC Homelessness Service also co-funded a specific post which managed all cases that approached the service either on homeless grounds or for 'Safe at Home' works, ensuring follow-up support / contact after any practical works had been completed.
- 4.26. There was limited direct working with social housing providers regarding domestic abuse considerations. However, some engagement was undertaken, with the SBC Homelessness Service bringing together partners who were working / supporting those experiencing homelessness via a multi-agency forum (attended by social housing providers and organisations supporting those who were experiencing domestic abuse). The Council also engaged with tenants of Registered Providers and provided advice and support (via the SBC Homelessness Service and SBC Lettings & Nominations Service), and the SBC Homelessness Service Manager represented the wider service at the corporate Domestic Abuse Steering Group.
- 4.27. Noting previous backlogs for properties via the TVHF platform, the Committee was informed that this had eased due to improvements in team capacity. In response, Members encouraged greater awareness of support services for those families / individuals moving into the Borough (a potential area which could be assisted through the commissioned service, Family Action).
- 4.28. Empathising with the challenges faced by the service in terms of limited housing options and too many competing priority cases, the Committee heard that homeless families were provided with temporary accommodation (hostel or self-contained dispersed), and that B&B accommodation was used only in exceptional circumstances. There may also be instances where out-of-Borough placements were made, but again these were exceptional circumstances or when it was not safe for the family to remain in the Borough. Domestic abuse cases were classified 'band 1' (highest priority) on TVHF, though there may be others experiencing this type of abuse who were also trying to get the same available property.

- 4.29. Harbour had been working with families affected by domestic abuse across the region for over 50 years. Commissioned in several North East Local Authority areas (including Stockton-on-Tees), its services supported the whole family, including children and young people who were previously the forgotten victims, with their views often downplayed or dismissed. Despite positive change over the years, there remained much work to be done around educating professionals and the public on this issue (particularly schools).
- 4.30. **Support available for families and children in Stockton:** There were several strands of support available to those children and families within the Borough who were experiencing / had experienced domestic abuse – safe accommodation (including dispersed properties), outreach support, the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service, assertive outreach (intensive support for those with additional needs), counselling, recovery, health IDVAs (the Hospital IDVA based at the University Hospital of North Tees also helped raise awareness of domestic abuse to health professionals, whilst the GP IDVA worked across 16 practices within Stockton-on-Tees), the Children and Young People (CYP) Team, and the Domestic Abuse Prevention Service (DAPS). In terms of safe accommodation, whilst there were no specialist refuges within the Borough, there was ongoing dialogue about these being introduced locally.
- 4.31. **Data in relation to children affected by domestic abuse:** For January 2024 – July 2025, 867 individual children and young people were referred into Harbour’s CYP Team (equating to around 45 per month). During this period, Harbour had completed support with 690 of those children and young people (the remaining individuals were still currently accessing the service).

4.32. **CYP model of support:** A flowchart (see graphic right) demonstrated the key stages of referral, triage, assessment, and subsequent levels of support (either group, 1:1, or a mix of both, depending on need) which was always undertaken within safe places where the individual felt comfortable. Family assistance and guidance was provided throughout (recognising that siblings could also be affected), encompassing direct support for parents / carers as appropriate.

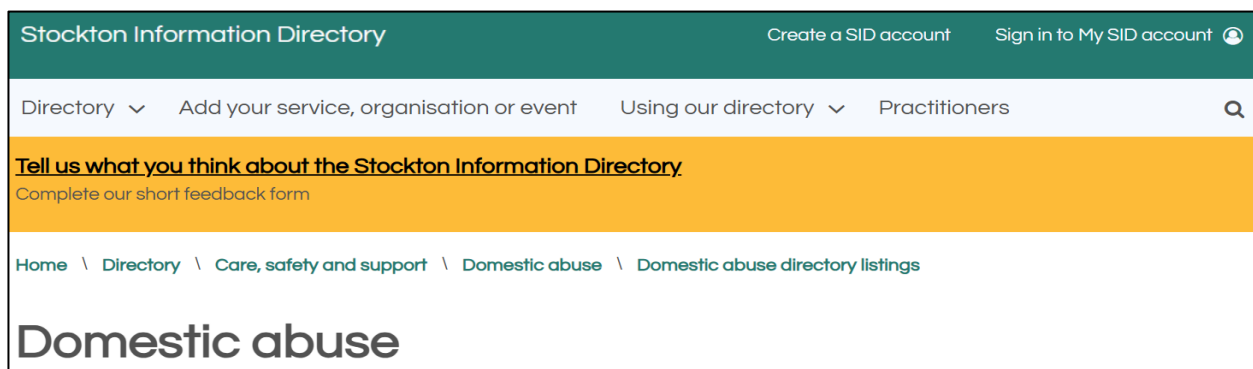
It was explained that anyone could refer into Harbour (including self-referrals) and recognised that, in terms of assessment, a child’s interpretation of a situation may well be different to their parents’ view. Referred individuals were not merely placed on a waiting list – fortnightly ‘check-in’ calls took place with families, and cases could be triaged to manage risk. This approach helped build relationships and eliminate any lack of trust.



- 4.33. **First level support:** Children / young people aged 3-18 joined therapeutic support groups which ran outside of school times and were delivered in age groupings. The focus was on prevention, safety, risk management and healthy relationships, offering a space for individuals to express feelings about their experiences and have these acknowledged. Each group ran weekly for four weeks, and the individual would attend those beneficial to their needs.
- 4.34. **Moderate level support:** Where an individual's needs were assessed as moderate (i.e. those experiencing acute circumstances whose harms could escalate without intervention), they would be offered an intensive version of first level support – this targeted any problematic behaviours / presenting issues and involved 1:1 support or smaller groups. As well as covering the themes for groups in first level support, these children / young people may also explore self-worth / identity, emotional regulation, anger management, family history of domestic abuse, and self-care.
- 4.35. **Specialist level support:** The decision about specialist level support would depend upon the circumstances of the individual, as well as the level of need. In line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, if a child's physiological and safety needs were not met, they were unable to engage with psychological therapy (if they were still experiencing domestic abuse, specialist therapy may not be appropriate). In such instances, they would be allocated a caseworker to work intensively as above to prevent escalation. If appropriate, the child / young person would receive support from Harbour's specialist-trained counsellor.
- 4.36. **Adolescent support:** Harbour had a specialist adolescent worker role which supported children and young people aged 12+ who may be using harm, and worked closely with a Young Person's (YP) IDVA to support with teenage relationship abuse.
- 4.37. **YP IDVA:** The overall purpose of the YP IDVAs was to provide a trauma-informed, client-led support service to young people aged 12-17 who were experiencing harm from domestic abuse (interpersonal abuse) – this would enable them to address issues resulting from experiences of domestic abuse, be empowered to aspire to a positive future, and prevent future abuse by promoting healthy attitudes to relationships. There had been a noticeable increase in those coming into the service as victims within their own relationships.
- 4.38. **Support provided to families and children in our safe accommodation:** Family work involving 1:1 and group sessions with mothers and children (for those in both refuges and dispersed properties), Early Years Practitioner (EYP) support for pregnant mothers and 0-3 year-olds (for those in refuges), weekly wellbeing sessions for mothers and children (funded separately from national charity, Kids in Mind), and Holidays Are Fun (HAF) involvement (additional funding from SBC in school holidays) were all highlighted.

## Stockton Information Directory

- 4.39. Provided by SBC, the [Stockton Information Directory](#) included a list of domestic abuse-related support services available across the Borough and beyond.



## Partners

- 4.40. In addition to **Harbour** which worked closely with a multitude of agencies involved with families (attending joint visits and assessments, working together to support engagement / safety planning, and attending safeguarding meetings in relation to families accessing support) and offered workforce development opportunities to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) practitioners (free of charge), a range of local and regional organisations were relevant to, and were therefore approached to contribute towards, this scrutiny review.

*'Health care settings are often trusted environments, and so are a key partner in the response to child victims of domestic abuse. The safeguarding of children, young people and adults who are at risk is a fundamental obligation for everyone who works in the National Health Service (NHS), and it is imperative that professionals are confident to identify domestic abuse in all its forms and respond appropriately and proportionately.'*

**Domestic Abuse Commissioner: Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse (Apr 25)**

### Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT): Health Visitors

- 4.41. Commissioned by SBC to provide local 0-19 services, and in the privileged position of being one of a small number of organisations providing support across the ante-natal to pre-school period, HDFT practitioners completed and / or reviewed the holistic health needs assessment at each of the Trust's seven contact points with an individual / family (this was above the five nationally-mandated reviews for early years).

### North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT): Maternity

- 4.42. In September 2025, NTHFT reported that, through client outcomes and data collected, Harbour had gathered evidence that the IDVA service was creating opportunities for survivors to safely disclose abuse and access tailored support. Case studies highlighted both the direct engagement between clients and the Hospital IDVAs, and the proactive steps taken to ensure survivors received timely and effective interventions. Without this role, many clients may not have accessed specialist domestic abuse support.
- 4.43. There had been a marked increase in referrals from the hospital to the IDVA / Harbour service. Having the IDVA based on site had enhanced communication, encouraged patient engagement, and allowed for immediate safeguarding, signposting, and referrals. This also showed that hospital staff were becoming more confident and consistent in recognising victims of domestic abuse and referring them to the right support at the point of crisis. If a patient did not wish to access ongoing support, each person referred still had the opportunity to engage with the IDVA on site for support and safety planning.
- 4.44. The Hospital IDVA role was vital in supporting clients who attended hospital and may be vulnerable or unaware that they were experiencing domestic abuse. The role not only raised awareness of domestic abuse but also enabled engagement with specialist support services. By working closely with ward staff, the IDVA promoted knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse, and strengthened responses to disclosures.
- 4.45. As the role was trauma-informed, the Hospital IDVA was able to respond quickly and effectively in an environment where staff were often extremely busy and may not have the capacity to provide in-depth support themselves. The IDVA delivered immediate safety advice and guidance to clients at the point of disclosure, ensuring timely intervention that may not otherwise be available. The presence of an IDVA within the hospital also increased access to support for

clients who were harder to reach, thereby reducing risk and encouraging engagement with services (e.g. elderly clients, who were often less likely to access external support, were more effectively engaged through the IDVAs consistent presence on wards and their ability to build trust through repeated contact).

### **Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): CAMHS**

- 4.46. Recognising the mental health impact on children who had experienced domestic abuse, a contribution was sought, and subsequently received, from TEWVs Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

### **NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB)**

- 4.47. Domestic Abuse was one of the main priorities of the ICB and was recognised within all NHS contracts, with Trusts expected to ensure that the workforce could prevent, identify and respond consistently through a 'Think Family First' lens. The ICB was a strategic partner on the Community Safety Partnerships across the 14 Local Authorities, as well as the Domestic Abuse Board, and published a link around domestic abuse and safeguarding every month. A 'Safeguarding Network for Health Professionals' existed across the area, and in 2023, the ICB signed up to the Sexual Safety Charter. From a wider NHS England perspective, 'Standing Together for Domestic Abuse' was a network with learning opportunities which met four / six times a year.
- 4.48. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) brought together professionals from various sectors to share information and develop safety plans for high-risk victims, and ICBs participated in Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) to learn from past incidents and improve future safeguarding responses (it was noted that communication between agencies can sometimes fail). Collaboration among Local Authorities, the police, and voluntary organisations ensured comprehensive support for children and families – Stockton-on-Tees was well served in terms of partnership-working.

### **Primary Care Networks (PCNs)**

- 4.49. In Stockton-on-Tees, there were 20 practices (independent businesses) which were split between four PCNs (Billingham and Norton, BYTES, Norton Stockton, and Stockton). PCNs were groups of practices working together to deliver services and work in collaboration with other providers to deliver proactive and personalised care. They were responsible for delivering a national 'directed enhanced service' (DES) contract, though there was no requirement in the DES in respect of 'domestic abuse'.
- 4.50. Recognising the importance of primary care within the context of this scrutiny topic, the Committee was keen to engage with local practices. A survey was therefore developed and issued to the Borough's four PCNs via the NENC ICB (for results, see paragraphs 4.99, 4.110, 4.116 and 4.148).

### **Cleveland Police**

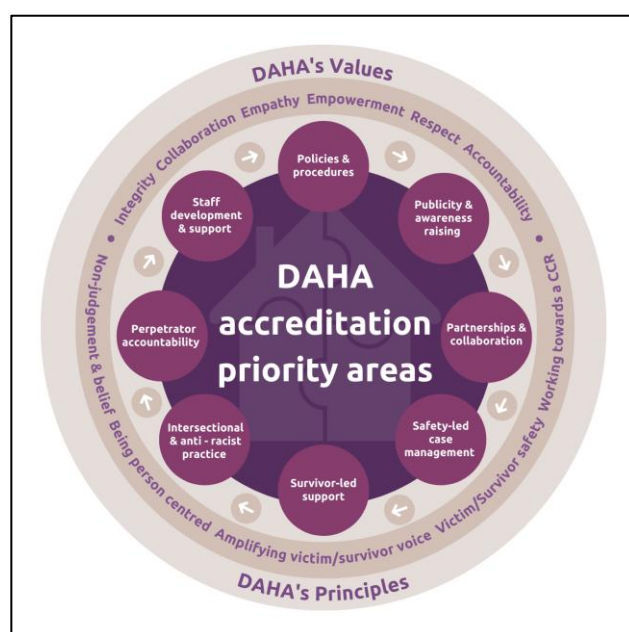
- 4.51. Cleveland Police's core responsibilities were protecting life and wellbeing, investigating all reports, holding offenders accountable, and adopting a multi-agency approach. Safeguarding was child-centred (via a 'through the eyes of a child' principle and a specific Child Strategy commitment), with specialist measures and support in place around early intervention and referral, protective orders (the force was one of a few forces using Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Orders (DAPOs) for longer-term safeguarding), and training and awareness. This was all within the context of a national legal framework (Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Children Act 2004, Working Together 2023), including emergency powers where officers

could enter premises and remove children to safety if they believed a child was suffering, or was likely to suffer, significant harm.

- 4.52. In summary, Cleveland Police's responsibilities combined protection, investigation and prevention, underpinned by a child-first approach and strong multi-agency collaboration. Children were treated as victims, not bystanders, and safeguarding measures extended beyond immediate response to include school notifications, protective orders, and trauma-informed practices.
- 4.53. Locally, the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) managed the operational teams from the partnership working together. Staff were co-located to improve working relationships and the timeliness of the responses – this in turn led to the improved safeguarding of children. Shortly, the 'front door' arrangements were to split (Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees), however, Cleveland Police would still be co-located with partners.
- 4.54. At a tactical level, the partnership was managed via the 'engine room' – this included all partners joining together to manage governance, performance, and learning and development, alongside the operational business.

### Thirteen Housing Group

- 4.55. Thirteen's responsibility was to provide safe homes and support for victims of domestic abuse. It recognised that children exposed to domestic abuse were victims in their own right and was therefore required to take immediate safeguarding action when a child was at risk (which may involve contacting the police, Local Authority, or specialist services). Safe accommodation was offered via direct lets and priority bandings (emergency lets would also be considered if someone was in immediate danger), with emergency repairs / target hardening arranged to enhance protection. Domestic abuse / safeguarding policies (reviewed every three years, or earlier if regulations changed) were in place to support customers and staff alike, and the organisation worked in partnership with Local Authorities and multi-agency forums to ensure co-ordinated support.
- 4.56. Thirteen complied with the [Regulator of Social Housing standards on domestic abuse](#) through several key actions outlined in the policy, including awareness and training for all staff (part of which involved going into properties), adopting a victim-centred approach, having clear reporting and referral processes (using the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence) risk identification checklist), accessing specialist support and advice for customers, partnership-working, data-monitoring and continuous improvement, and compliance with consumer standards (neighbourhood, transparency, safety).
- 4.57. Thirteen was in the process of re-accreditation of the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance \(DAHA\)](#), a partnership comprising housing providers, Local Authorities and domestic abuse organisations which focused on how housing responded to domestic abuse. The alliance influenced government policy and was recognised as best practice by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the UK Government.



### Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG)

- 4.58. Mandated by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the objectives of the DASG were to oversee the delivery of system outcomes for domestic abuse (as defined within the [Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028](#)), facilitate the development and implementation of an Action Plan to deliver the strategy, and to adopt a whole system approach to domestic abuse (across partners). Membership included representation of the interests of victims of domestic abuse, the interests of children of domestic abuse victims, police, health services, and voluntary sector specialist services.
- 4.59. The DASG was a sub-group of the local Health and Wellbeing Board, a Board that was currently undergoing development work in relation to terms of reference / revised governance which would reinforce links with / update reports to other strategic groups (e.g. Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP), Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB)) and ensure clear lines of delivery.
- 4.60. DASG meetings were themed to align with the Domestic Abuse Strategy (overview of progress against actions, problem-solving (including discussions held on children and young people), etc.), with resulting actions including the clarification of the Harbour education offer to schools (involving attendance at Head Teacher meetings), and awareness-raising of Harbour children and young people workers and their connection into SBC Children's Services and wider colleagues. The whole system and whole family approach focus had led to wider community awareness-raising work, as well as work with adult victims and perpetrators (which would impact upon children and young people) – a 'no wrong door' policy was also adopted to eliminate barriers associated with identifying / raising instances of domestic abuse.
- 4.61. **Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028:** The strategy's vision had three distinct elements:
- everyone experiencing domestic abuse was listened to, supported and protected to live their life free from abuse.
  - all victims of domestic abuse had access to inclusive, quality, affordable and appropriate safe accommodation / support.
  - perpetrators of domestic abuse were held to account and supported to change behaviour.



A recent progress review of the existing strategy had been undertaken – this had helped set priorities for the year ahead.

- 4.62. **Early Years Children & Young People (EYCYP):** Actions undertaken in relation to this demographic included the exploration of ways of working with childcare providers (including pre-school), workforce development planning for frontline professionals working in the system for EYCYP (373 people trained to date in year two (total of 788 across two years, including schools, nursery managers and childminders)), and healthy relationships training in schools / school community awareness and a 'healthy schools' approach (how schools sat within the community).

Further achievements had seen joint assessment / planning between social care and Harbour, the establishment of a CYP Team in Harbour and a GP Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) working in primary care, and the piloting of a Domestic Abuse Protection Order

(DAPO) (in conjunction with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland) which now included a zone rather than a house, thus helping protect children going to school from ‘bumping’ into the abuser. The OPCC / Catalyst ‘[Bridging the Gap](#)’ report was also referenced (subsequently shared with the Committee) – this had helped to shape an understanding of the picture regarding domestic abuse within ethnically diverse communities across Cleveland (thus informing the support offer).

In terms of support from services / commissioned services, 0-19 health visiting and public health school nursing identified and responded to domestic abuse through several approaches, including routine enquiry and arranging meetings with families outside the home when appropriate. Response was risk-based, with actions tailored to the level of risk disclosed, and referrals made to relevant partners (e.g. Children’s Hub (CHUB), Early Help, STEPS, Harbour, etc.). There were strong partnerships with Harbour, ensuring all staff were trained to Level 3 in domestic abuse awareness and received regular supervision. Individual cases were reviewed through deep dives to ensure effective support and safeguarding.

Other notable developments included the Change Grow Live (CGL) Hidden Harm Team working with children and young people (recognising that domestic abuse and substance misuse could co-exist, this team also linked to Harbour as needed), the OPCC-funded Hospital IDVA which linked with maternity and midwifery (a key risk point with regard to domestic abuse), and SBC Children’s Services work on ‘Families First Partnership’ system reforms.

- 4.63. **Community Awareness:** In terms of awareness-raising across Stockton-on-Tees, 100% of libraries and 10% of primary schools had received training on domestic abuse (the DASG was seeking to increase take-up from the latter). Briefing sessions had also been held with nursery managers and childminders. Since 2019-2020, there had also been a steady (and, aside from in 2023-2024, continuing) rise in the number of applications for [Clare’s Law](#) (a scheme that allowed the police to disclose previous abusive behaviour about a current or previous partner). In 2019-2020, there were around 250 applications – this had increased to around 750 in 2024-2025.
- 4.64. **Outcome Monitoring Framework:** Developed by the DASG, this framework monitored progress of strategic priorities which themselves were aligned to the Council’s Stockton-on-Tees Plan, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and other key strategies (e.g. Community Safety Strategy). The priorities were all relevant to children and young people (including early years), and whilst the DASG was still finalising the indicators that would be used to establish progress, much had already been achieved in relation to the existing strategy.
- 4.65. **Next Steps:** Whilst acknowledging that there was more to do in relation to this demographic, the DASG did already have children and young people as a focus area, linking with the ‘Families First Partnership’ agenda (working group) – this would ensure joined-up strategic outcomes regarding domestic abuse and children and young people, including joint strategic outcomes with other key strategies (via the Health and Wellbeing Board), ‘Families First Partnership’ (children’s system reforms) considerations involving work with communities, safeguarding, family support, early help and ‘front door’ to services, and the ongoing SBC *Powering Our Future* – Early Intervention and Prevention: Complex Lives (severe multiple disadvantage) work.

Several other children and young people-related developments were also envisaged, including the exploration of opportunities to maximise the identification of domestic abuse in maternity services (Hospital IDVA already in place, but desire to do more), the continued strengthening of relationships with childcare providers and safeguarding partnerships (including exploring joint training opportunities), a whole-school approach to domestic abuse (which was building, but could still be enhanced), a community awareness plan (expanding to include a bystander programme for children and young people), and continued wider work on empowering the workforce, repeat perpetrators, and repeat victims.

- 4.66. The Committee praised the involvement of health organisations in local partnership arrangements (as this was where many experiences of domestic abuse could be identified) and commended the emphasis on local organisations and agencies talking to each other.
- 4.67. Members expressed disappointment at only 10% of local schools receiving training on domestic abuse and asked where the problem lay in terms of this low take-up. SBC officers stated that there had been some past confusion around the offer available to schools (some thought there was a cost attached) and its promotion – this had now changed and an improvement in take-up was anticipated.
- 4.68. The Committee sought further details on the role of the GP IDVA and whether this was one individual. Members were informed that this was indeed a singular role (though was supported by another staff member) which provided support at certain times and across multiple sites (not all local practices were signed up to this, though). The Committee was interested to know how successful this arrangement was and how this was determined – SBC officers stated that analysis could be shared (which Harbour subsequently provided – see below graphic), though noted previous difficulties in engaging with general practices around the issue of domestic abuse.

#### **GP IDVA overview**

*'The GP IDVA role has been working extremely well and has had a clear, positive impact. Since the role was introduced, we have seen a significant increase in referrals coming through GP practices compared to the period before the role was in place. This shows that the presence of an IDVA within primary care is helping to raise awareness among GPs and practice staff, is improving identification of domestic abuse, and is providing patients with quicker and more direct access to specialist support.*

*Prior to the IDVA being in post within the GP surgeries, we have ran a data check to show the total number of referrals from any GP surgery across Stockton into Harbour – the total number over a 12-month period was 5 (1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023).*

*We have then compared that to the number of referrals made from the GP surgeries to the IDVA / Harbour now the GP IDVA is in post and on site within the surgeries – the total number of referrals over a 12-month period between 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 was 128.*

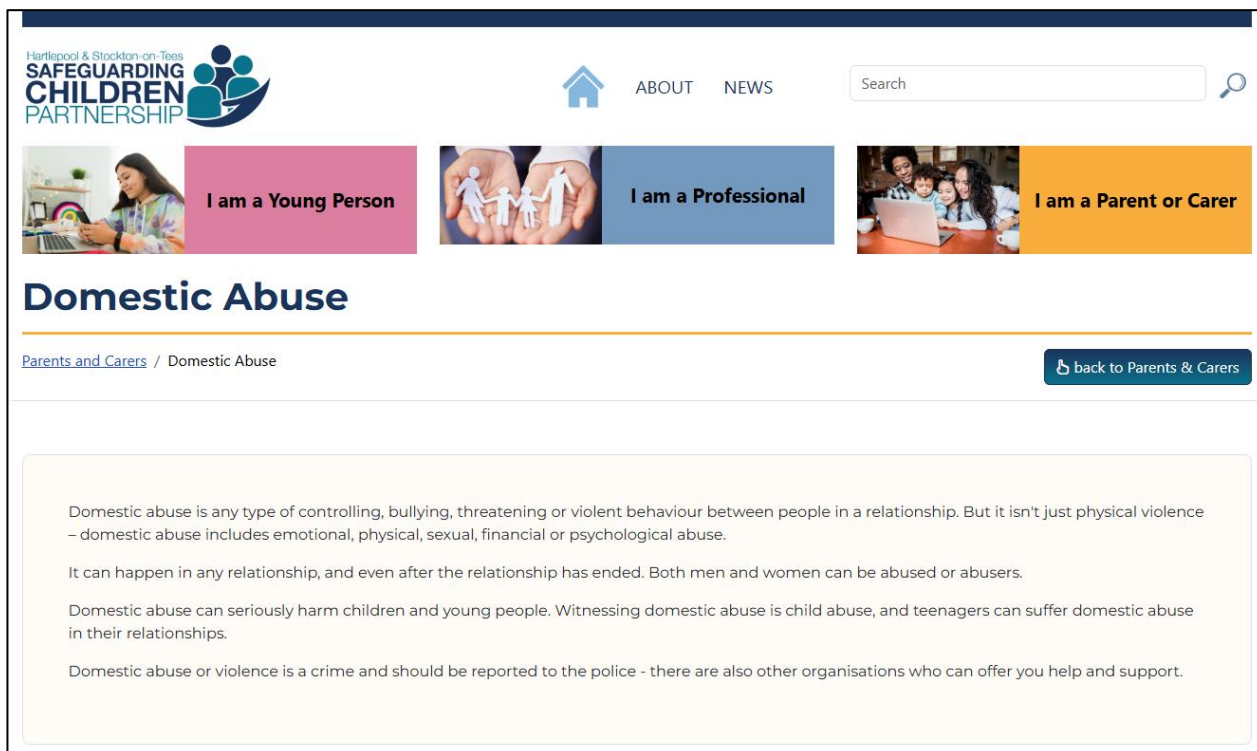
*The increase in referrals demonstrates that survivors who might otherwise not have disclosed in other settings are now being identified and supported earlier. The GP IDVA role is therefore strengthening pathways between healthcare and specialist services, ensuring that more individuals receive timely and appropriate help.'*

**Harbour  
September 2025**

- 4.69. Third-party referrals (i.e. those raising domestic abuse-related concerns from outside the environment that these were / allegedly were occurring) were discussed, with the Committee questioning how these were handled. SBC officers gave assurance that anyone was able to make a referral through the Children's Hub (CHUB) and that these could be done anonymously – this would then be screened for any other information regarding those involved before a decision was made on how to proceed. SBC officers also noted that should such a referral be received, Harbour would provide advice and an opportunity to meet on neutral territory to ascertain further information (though care was needed not to negatively affect an ongoing situation).
- 4.70. The Committee asked whether any interaction took place with housing associations and heard that links already existed, with Thirteen Housing Group represented in DASG planning workshops. In addition, Thirteen had a safeguarding team which linked with Harbour, and also worked closely with SBC Community Safety colleagues who dealt with housing services.

## Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)

- 4.71. Established in April 2019, the [HSSCP](#) was a multi-agency arrangement made up of statutory and non-statutory partners from across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees which had responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The four lead safeguarding partners (LSPs) – Hartlepool Borough Council, SBC, the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), and Cleveland Police (Chief Officer) – had an equal and joint responsibility for their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements / partnership. They set the strategic direction, vision and culture of the partnership, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively.



The screenshot shows the website for the Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership. The header includes the logo, navigation links for 'ABOUT' and 'NEWS', and a search bar. Below the header are three main navigation buttons: 'I am a Young Person' (pink), 'I am a Professional' (blue), and 'I am a Parent or Carer' (orange). The main content area is titled 'Domestic Abuse' and includes a breadcrumb trail 'Parents and Carers / Domestic Abuse' and a 'back to Parents & Carers' button. The text on the page defines domestic abuse as any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship, including emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. It notes that it can happen in any relationship and even after it has ended, and that it can seriously harm children and young people. It also states that domestic abuse or violence is a crime and should be reported to the police.

- 4.72. To achieve the HSSCP vision (*'Every child in Hartlepool and Stockton feels safe, secure and protected from harm; enabling them to reach their full potential'*), a range of consultation and engagement was undertaken to unpick areas which required focus as part of a rolling programme. The HSSCP Independent Scrutineer also carried out annual deep-dive review work in line with Department of Education requirements.
- 4.73. Despite domestic abuse not being one of the partnerships priorities over recent years, HSSCP monitored and responded to this issue by receiving and scrutinising key performance indicators (KPIs) regarding domestic abuse (tasking actions to existing groups where required), and by receiving minutes and assurance reports from the Domestic Abuse Partnership and updates from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland (i.e. [Perpetrator Strategy](#)). In addition, it undertook Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews of serious child safeguarding cases, identifying where domestic abuse was a feature (highlighting key learning and responding to this learning through the HSSCP Engine Room, Training Sub-Group and Procedures Sub-Group), and regularly reviewed, updated and promoted training and guidance on domestic abuse across the multi-agency workforce.
- 4.74. HSSCP agencies and representatives had been involved in the development, review and implementation of domestic abuse strategies (e.g. via the OPCC (Perpetrator Strategy) and the Domestic Abuse Partnership (Domestic Abuse Strategy)), and the Tees Procedures Group (a

sub-group of both HSSCP and South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership) undertook a review of the '[Assessing and Responding to the Impact of Domestic Abuse](#)' in 2023 which was updated and uploaded to the Tees Procedures website.

- 4.75. In 2025, when the joint-targeted area inspection (JTAI) focus on domestic abuse was announced, the HSSCP Engine Room undertook a multi-agency audit on this theme. In addition to evidence of cross-cutting good practice, three subsequent recommendations were being progressed via the Engine Room's combined learning Action Plan:
- when a perpetrator was such high-risk, how could professionals be supported to work together to effectively engage
  - how to strengthen approaches to recognising risk, hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim, and keep the child at the centre
  - how to promote best practice principles across two Local Authority areas with differing domestic abuse approaches / models.
- 4.76. Members questioned why domestic abuse had not been a specific priority for HSSCP in recent years and asked what would make it such – in response, it was stated that the partnership's key ongoing priority around trauma included domestic abuse matters. The Committee welcomed this and emphasised the point that 'safeguarding was everyone's business'.

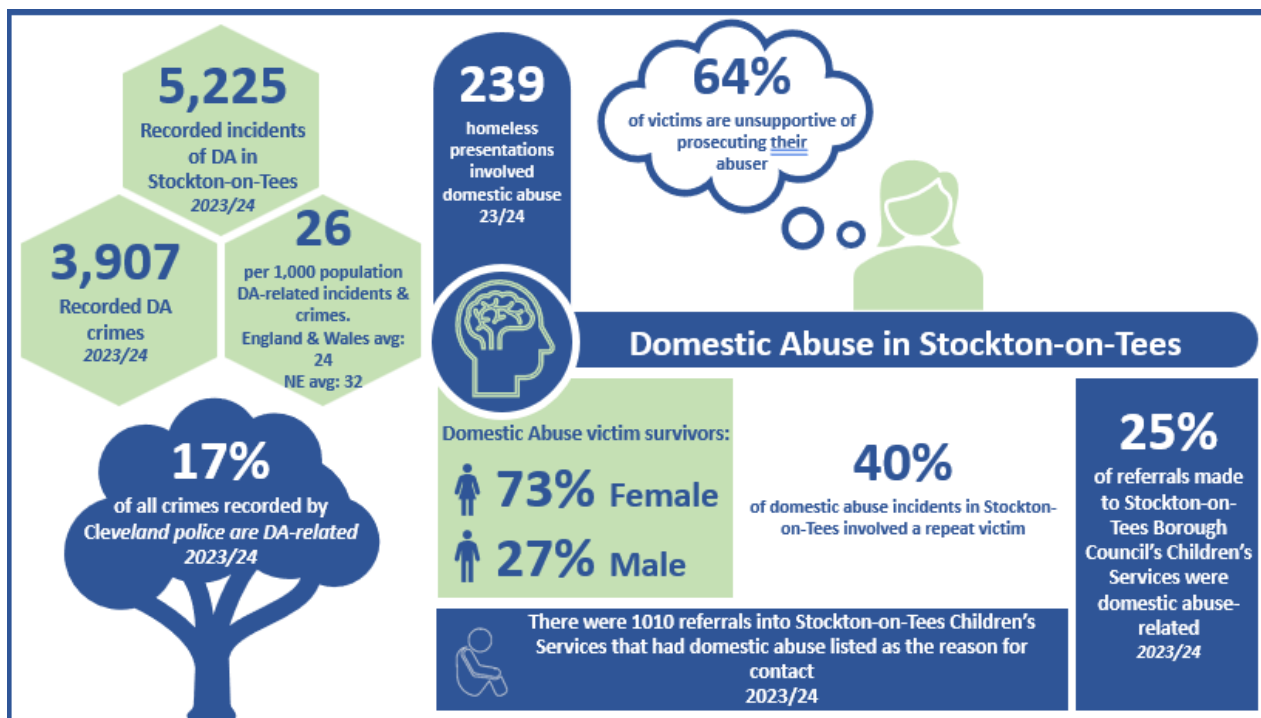
## Prevalence

*'Estimates of the number of children affected by domestic abuse vary and are hampered by the underreporting of abuse. The lack of a prevalence survey and limited official statistics in England and Wales makes assessing the numbers of children affected difficult. This undermines prioritisation and resource allocated to preventing, identifying and responding to this harm.'*

*'Assessing the true prevalence of children experiencing domestic abuse is difficult due to social norms and attitudes that perpetuate familial norms of privacy, shame and denial of abuse within the home. Minimisation and limited recognition of coercive control create insurmountable barriers to disclosure for many victims and survivors.'*

**Domestic Abuse Commissioner: Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experiences of domestic abuse (Apr 25)**

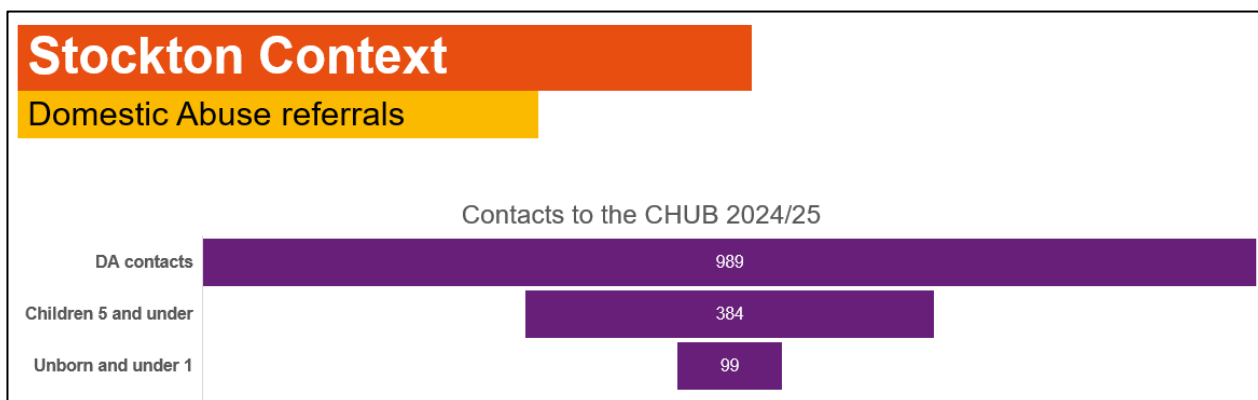
- 4.77. Crime data from the Home Office for the year ending March 2024 showed the number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police. Of the over two million estimated victims, 851,062 'crimes' and 499,366 'incidents' were documented, though the number of suspects referred, charged, and offenders convicted was very low by comparison.
- 4.78. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2024), approximately one in five (20.5%) people aged 16 years and over had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years – this equated to 33,508 people in Stockton-on-Tees given its 16 years+ population was estimated to be 163,456 (ONS population estimates, June 2023). An estimated 4.8% (7,845) of people aged 16 years and over (6.6% of women and 3.0% of men) had experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
- 4.79. Statistics were highlighted in relation to the extent of domestic abuse within Stockton-on-Tees (see graphic overleaf). During 2023-2024, there were 5,225 recorded 'incidents' of domestic abuse across the Borough and 3,907 recorded domestic abuse 'crimes', with 17% of all crimes recorded by Cleveland Police during this period being domestic abuse-related.



The Stockton-on-Tees rate of 26 domestic abuse incidents and crimes per 1,000 population was higher than the England and Wales average (24) but less than the North East average (32).

### Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)

- 4.80. From a Local Authority perspective, during 2023-2024, 1,010 referrals into SBC Children's Services had domestic abuse listed as the reason for contact, with 25% of referrals made to SBC Children's Services over this period being domestic abuse-related (a reduced percentage compared to 2022-2023 when this was around a third). The gender split of domestic abuse victim-survivors was 73% female: 27% male, 40% of domestic abuse incidents involved a repeat victim, and 64% of victims were unsupportive of prosecuting their abuser.
- 4.81. Data on contacts to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) for 2024-2025 indicated that 989 domestic abuse-related referrals were received in relation to children up to 16 years-old (around 25% of the total number of referrals received (just under 4,000)). Of these 989, 384 involved children aged five or under, and 99 were unborn or under one year-old.



The police were by far the biggest referrer, submitting 485 (49%) of all referrals relating to domestic abuse (it was noted that SBC and Cleveland Police were currently undertaking a joint

pilot involving daily 'PiTstop' meetings to triage domestic abuse referrals – this identified anything considered medium-risk and above, and also involved Harbour). Referrals from other organisations / agencies were very dispersed, with some, arguably, not as high as they perhaps should be (see graphic below).

<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Police	485	49.0%
Education-Primary School	64	6.5%
Relative	48	4.9%
PITSTOP	45	4.6%
Probation	41	4.1%
External LA Services	28	2.8%
Education-Secondary School	27	2.7%
Midwifery	27	2.7%
EDT	27	2.7%
Health Visitor	22	2.2%
A&E Department	20	2.0%
Voluntary Organisation/Charity	20	2.0%
Anonymous	19	1.9%
Social Worker (SBC)	17	1.7%
CHUB	15	1.5%
Service Provider	12	1.2%
Education-Nursery	12	1.2%
Adult Mental Health	10	1.0%
CAMHS	7	0.7%
Other Health Providers	7	0.7%
Adult Social Care	6	0.6%
Early Help	6	0.6%
Prison	5	0.5%
Neighbour/Friend	5	0.5%
Ambulance	4	0.4%
Education-College/Further Education	3	0.3%
Stockton BC Department	2	0.2%
Housing	2	0.2%
Other Section in Social Care	2	0.2%
School Nurse	1	0.1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Table: Contacts to the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) for 2024-2025**

- 4.82. The Committee was particularly shocked that 64% of victims were unsupportive of prosecuting their abuser and wondered what proportion of these cases involved victims who had children and whether they were aware of the possible impact of domestic abuse upon their child. The victim-survivor gender-related statistics for 2023-2024 were also queried, with Members suggesting that the male figure (27%) may be an underestimate due to a reluctance to come forward and report their experience.
- 4.83. The Committee noted the labelling of cases as either 'crimes' or 'incidents' and felt this needed further probing to establish how instances of domestic abuse were determined / recorded. SBC officers referenced the Council's involvement in work being undertaken on a Tees Valley-wide basis (led by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland) around perpetrators of domestic abuse.

- 4.84. Links between the rise in alcohol consumption / substance misuse and domestic abuse were discussed, with SBC officers acknowledging that these factors were interconnected, and that settings where such behaviour was entrenched were more likely to see exploitation occur (it was also noted that alcohol and drugs could be used as a coping mechanism). Whilst domestic abuse could be a compounding factor in areas of deprivation, it was, however, prevalent across all communities.
- 4.85. The Committee requested further statistics on domestic abuse prevalence over a longer period of time to ascertain its trajectory (see paragraph 4.87). SBC officers stated that an increase in recorded incidents may be reflective of more individuals reporting cases (as opposed to a rise in prevalence) which was to be welcomed.
- 4.86. Analysing the CHUB referral data, the Committee wondered if safeguarding-related assessment tools used by the Council and its partners included specific references to domestic abuse so that professionals were aware of the signs they should be looking out for. Members also felt that the statistics for the EDT (Emergency Duty Team) – 27 for the 2024-2025 period – should be checked to see which organisation made the original referral (as the EDT would have merely forwarded this on).

### Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy

- 4.87. In September 2025, the Committee received a briefing on the ongoing refresh of the local Community Safety Strategy (the current version was due to expire at the end of 2025). With reference to the draft 'Community Safety Plan: Stockton-on-Tees 2025-2027', Members drew attention to the statement (within the 'What do we know about crime in Stockton-on-Tees?' section) that '*Domestic abuse overall is showing a downward trend; however, incidents involving children present in the household are beginning to rise*'. Noting the ongoing review of Children affected by Domestic Abuse, the Committee requested any data and / or accompanying narrative which could contribute to the evidence for this work. The 'Stockton-on-Tees Crime and Community Safety Strategic Needs Assessment 2025-2026' document (produced to inform the new strategy) was subsequently shared which highlighted the following:

Domestic abuse has gradually decreased over the 3-year period to 2024/25 with a 4% reduction in 2024/25 compared with the previous year. Repeat victims of domestic abuse as a proportion of the total victims reduced in Stockton to 36.8%, slightly over the force average of 35.4%. There is a decreasing trend of repeat victims across all areas in the Tees Valley.



The number of domestic abuse incidents in Stockton-on-Tees with a child present in the household is showing an increasing trend (an increase of 5% year-on-year in 2023/24 and 2024/25), whilst the proportion of domestic violence incidents this cohort makes-up is relatively stable, averaging around 39% of all reported incidents every year, this increasing picture is concerning.

DA with child present			
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of DA incidents with at least one child present	1205	1266	1325
Difference in number	-	61	59
Difference (%)	-	5%	5%
% of all DA incidents	39.00%	39.60%	39.50%

## Cleveland Police

- 4.88. During the December 2025 evidence-gathering session involving Cleveland Police, the Committee enquired about the prevalence of domestic abuse-related cases across the Borough and heard that around 18% of all recorded incidents involved this type of abuse (it was also noted that there was an average of 30-40 domestic incidents across the Cleveland footprint per day). There had been a slight increase in cases over the past year, and it was later confirmed that Cleveland's domestic abuse rate had been above the 'most similar group' (police force) average in each of the three years from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 (with a small reduction in 2023-2024). Further comparisons with any force within England and Wales could be accessed via a [Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool](#) provided by the Office for National Statistics, though it was noted that, currently, there was no routinely published national dataset which reported how many children were involved in domestic abuse police incidents across England and Wales.
- 4.89. Conscious of previous cuts to police budgets over the past decade and more, Members questioned whether the force could deal with this rise in identified domestic abuse. The Stockton District Commander expressed confidence that Cleveland Police was managing demand and gave assurance that domestic abuse was a force priority – this involved ensuring the right resources were available at the right times, with highly-skilled call-handlers an integral part in identifying and categorising issues which could then be acted on promptly. There were also flexible options to meet with domestic abuse victims when it suited them. The key message was that an individual would get an effective response if contacting Cleveland Police, with the force doing what was right for the victim and their family. Mindful of upcoming decisions around the latest police precept, Members felt it was important for the public to understand that it had to pay for good quality services and that this was a relatively small price to prevent much more significant issues arising.
- 4.90. A Committee query was raised around whether domestic abuse tended to happen more in certain areas (e.g. deprived locations). It was acknowledged that poor socio-economic factors could be a driver, though it was stressed that this type of abuse happened within all settings and that it would not be appropriate to target one particular group / community. Members also referenced the ongoing national priority on violence against women and girls (VAWG), along with past concerns around victims withdrawing complaints due to the fear of repercussions from their abuser. Whilst it was acknowledged that some did not want to proceed through the criminal justice system, the force did not need the support of victims to go through this route.

## Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)

- 4.91. HSSCP did not hold any data specifically in relation to the prevalence of children’s exposure to domestic abuse. HSSCP received data on this from the Local Authority.
- 4.92. For the period 2020-2024, HSSCPs Performance Management Framework (PMF) included two key performance indicators (KPIs) in respect of domestic abuse:
- the rate of domestic abuse incidents with a child present in the year-to-date
  - the percentage of domestic abuse incidents with a child present within 12 months of a similar incident out of all domestic abuse incidents in the year-to-date

SBC collected and reported these KPIs on behalf of, and to, HSSCP on a quarterly basis.

- 4.93. In 2025, a new PMF was agreed which included five KPIs in respect of domestic abuse:
- Local Authority assessment factors (domestic abuse)
  - children subject to repeat plans where domestic abuse was a factor
  - children subject to a Child Protection Plan longer than 12 months where domestic abuse was a factor
  - number of children referred to domestic abuse support services
  - number of children supported by domestic abuse support services

Responsibility for collection and reporting of this data transferred over to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council in 2025.

- 4.94. The domestic abuse data reported to HSSCP under the above indicators over the past five years was not broken down into age-ranges to enable HSSCP to specifically comment upon early years prevalence. However, data published within the HSSCP annual report indicated a steady rise in the number of children witnessing a domestic abuse incident since 2020-2021, with only the 2022-2023 period seeing a fall when compared to the previous year (see graphic below). It was stated that data was just one element of intelligence and that relevant material from other sources was also considered.

The domestic abuse data reported in the HSSCP annual report over the past 5 years (at year end), including direction on travel, is as follows:

- 2020-21: **2,003** children witnessing a domestic abuse incident      ↑
- 2021-22: **2,153** children witnessing a domestic abuse incident      ↑
- 2022-23: **2,058** children witnessing a domestic abuse incident      ↓
- 2023-24: **2,121** children present during a domestic abuse incident      ↑
- 2024-25: **2,305** children present during a domestic abuse incident      ↑

- 4.95. Highlighting the review’s focus on early years, the Committee noted that there were no references to specific age-ranges within the HSSCP submission. Members were reminded that the partnership did not hold data itself but did observe indicators – should a key line of enquiry emerge, subsequent deep-dive work may lead to requests for further information.
- 4.96. Continuing with this theme, the Committee queried how HSSCP could identify relevant questions to ask if it did not hold data. Members were assured that HSSCP did see data alongside other information sources (including the child’s voice) and stated that its Performance Sub-Group could be approached regarding age-range-related considerations.

**Identification of those experiencing / at risk of experiencing domestic abuse and reporting of concerns (inc. support for staff)**

*'Given that less than 1 in 5 victims report their abuse to the police, many victims of domestic abuse do not come into contact with the criminal justice system. It is therefore important that a wide range of agencies and bodies are able to identify victims and know how to provide the right response. Early intervention by the voluntary sector and statutory agencies working together can help to protect adults and children from further harm, as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of abuse.'*

**Home Office: Domestic Abuse – Statutory Guidance (Jul 22)**

- 4.97. All partners had a responsibility to have written safeguarding policies, and staff should be trained to identify the signs of abuse and harm for children. Where there were concerns for a child's wellbeing, a referral should be made to children's social care (through the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB)).
- 4.98. [Chapter 6](#) of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance (Jul 22) outlined the role of individual agencies in identifying and responding to domestic abuse (including assessing risk), and contributors to this review were asked how local organisations ensured these crucial elements were being adequately met.
- 4.99. **Identifying at-risk individuals / families and staff confidence about spotting signs of domestic abuse**

Organisation	Response
<p><b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)</b></p> <p>Health Visitors</p>	<p>HDFT practitioners completed and / or reviewed the holistic health needs assessment at each of the Trust's seven contact points with an individual / family (above the five nationally-mandated reviews for early years) – this included, when safe to do so (i.e. no child over the age of 2 was present; individual was alone), routine and selective enquiry regarding any possible domestic abuse. If such an enquiry could not be asked at the previous contact, the plan would be to ask at the next available opportunity.</p> <p>If there was any historic or current intelligence shared regarding potential risk, the health visitor would arrange for a contact to take place outside the family home through discussion and supervision with their line manager and safeguarding colleagues.</p> <p>0-19 practitioners were made aware of high-risk vulnerable child and adult domestic abuse notifications through the local Children's Hub (CHUB) (indeed, HDFT sat within the CHUB, and liaised closely with SBC Early Help, leading / being involved in multi-agency work), and there were high priority reminders to the child's SystemOne record. HDFT was also notified of domestic abuse incidents through PiTstop (a police initiative).</p> <p>All 0-19 practitioners were trained (Level 3 Safeguarding Children) to be able to recognise signs and indicators of domestic abuse. Even if no disclosures were made, HDFT staff had a safeguarding single point of contact where supervision and advice could be sought in respect of concerns. As previously referenced, the requirement for the completion / review of the holistic health needs assessment also provided opportunities for the identification of domestic abuse-related issues.</p>

Organisation	Response
<p><b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)</b></p> <p>Maternity</p>	<p>All midwives undertook routine enquiry into domestic abuse and asked patients if they were currently experiencing domestic abuse. This was evidence-based to encourage people to disclose in a safe space. There was a Trust Safeguarding Team (including safeguarding midwives) and an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) available to support staff, patients, and their families. The safeguarding midwives provided regular supervision to hospital and community maternity staff.</p>
<p><b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)</b></p> <p>CAMHS</p>	<p>Referrals were received from a variety of sources, and may include concerns about emotional distress, behavioural issues, exposure to trauma or abuse, or family dysfunction / parental mental health. During initial screening, the CAMHS Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Team conducted triage assessments to determine urgency and appropriateness – these looked for risk indicators such as self-harm or suicidal ideation, signs of neglect or abuse, substance misuse, domestic violence, and school refusal or exclusion. Physical presentation and any changes to the ‘norm’ were also assessed.</p> <p>Beyond this initial phase, holistic assessments established any mental health symptoms (e.g. anxiety, depression, PTSD), family dynamics and parenting capacity, social determinants (housing, poverty, isolation), and ACEs. Multi-agency collaboration (including liaison with Local Authorities to share concerns / obtain further information) was undertaken where identified, and further formulation and risk assessment was conducted using the ‘five Ps’ framework (presenting problems, and perpetuating, precipitating, predisposing and protective factors).</p> <p>Staff confidence in spotting signs was dependent on the experience of the clinician working with the child / young person / family.</p>
<p><b>Primary Care Networks (PCNs)</b></p> <p>Survey Feedback</p>	<p>Key themes identified were collaboration across roles, identification and monitoring of at-risk individuals, structured information-sharing and early intervention, and training and use of safeguarding tools.</p> <p>Out of the Borough’s four PCNs, two felt that practice staff were ‘very confident’ about spotting the signs of domestic abuse, with the other two reporting that staff were ‘somewhat confident’.</p>
<p><b>Cleveland Police</b></p>	<p>Cleveland Police used a multi-layered approach, combining structured tools (officers applied the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence) framework during initial contact, with risk graded as standard, medium or high (though officers were trained not to rely solely on tick-box scoring)), professional judgement and contextual indicators (looking beyond physical injuries and considering behavioural cues, emotional state, and environmental factors), and information-sharing with other agencies (e.g. <i>Operation Encompass</i>, where schools were notified when children were present at domestic incidents).</p>
<p><b>Thirteen Housing Group</b></p>	<p>Domestic abuse affected Thirteen’s workforce and its customers, and the organisation reinforced staff awareness of their safeguarding duties and the importance of promptly reporting any concerns or issues. Colleagues were encouraged to trust their instincts and reinforcement was given that their professional judgement was valid. Raising awareness of this issue empowered everyone to recognise the signs of abuse, respond safely, and provide support effectively.</p> <p>In the last 12 months, 664 Thirteen customers were known to have experienced domestic abuse, with 139 tenancies sustained through its ‘stay-at-home’ (target hardening) scheme. Whilst these numbers were not increasing significantly, cases were becoming more complex (open longer / requiring more staff time).</p>

Organisation	Response
<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)</b>  Housing Services	<p>Staff were encouraged to trust their instincts when visiting properties (if something did not seem right, it probably was not).</p> <p>During 2024-2025, there were 78 presentations to the SBC Homelessness Service from families fleeing domestic abuse (which included six presentations from families fleeing domestic abuse from an associated person).</p>

- 4.100. The Committee sought clarity on the **HDFT** holistic approach to the health needs assessment conducted by health visitors. With attention drawn to what was a challenging, and often stressful, time after a baby was born, Members were informed that this process assisted in identifying vulnerability and need by looking for physical and emotional signs, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and the individual's own understanding of caregiving (potentially shaped by how they themselves were brought up). To assist with this, health visitors benefitted from good links with maternity professionals.
- 4.101. The Committee questioned if **NTHFT** had links with other Trusts (other than neighbours South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) regarding those individuals coming into the area and using its services. Members heard that whilst relationships did exist between Trusts, information-sharing was limited due to the use of different systems for patient records.
- 4.102. Responding to the **TEWV** submission, the Committee enquired about any age-related limitations on gathering information. The CAMHS offer was designed for 0-18 year-olds, though most service-users were over the age of 10 (rather than in the early years phase). Members queried the current CAMHS waiting list for Stockton-on-Tees and were informed that a routine appointment could now be obtained within a week (if urgent, this would be available earlier).
- 4.103. After being assured that the **TEWV** CAMHS was able to meet existing demand, the Committee asked if there was a set time between receiving a referral and triage taking place. It was stated that CAMHS managers met every week, cases were triaged within a week of receipt, and the referred individual was seen within two weeks (though usually well within this timeframe). Responding to a Member query around the average length of intervention, it was noted that this would depend on the complexity of an individual's situation / previous experiences, but that CAMHS tended to focus on moderate-to-severe cases, so contact was usually longer (reflecting the time required to build the therapeutic relationship which was vital in ensuring effective intervention).
- 4.104. The Committee sought clarity from **TEWV** on whether a scenario where a child was living in poor conditions was considered 'abuse' and heard that an understanding of the bigger picture would be required to ascertain this (though such a situation could suggest neglect and / or financial abuse). Home visits were conducted, and professionals were active in the community, though it was stressed that any inklings around potential abuse needed to be reported to allow investigations to be initiated.
- 4.105. Regarding the **Cleveland Police** response, the Committee initiated a discussion around [Operation Encompass](#). In response to concerns about the timeframe for informing schools when a child had been present at a domestic abuse incident, Members were notified that a case would be reported to an educational provider on the morning of the next day (even if the incident took place late on the previous evening). A further query confirmed that pre-schools / nurseries were not part of this operation and would instead be picked up through the local Children's Hub (CHUB) where staff would contact a relevant early years setting / health provider / GP after a referral. The Committee requested an update on the current situation with *Operation Encompass* and this was subsequently provided by the force:

*'Since last year, Cleveland Police have enhanced their process for Operation Encompass notifications. Schools now receive more comprehensive information regarding all notifications relating to high-risk domestic abuse incidents, with broader context and circumstances provided. Work has commenced on robotic processing solutions, which are expected to facilitate the automation of notifications. Once operational, this will ensure that contextual details are included in all notifications.'*

*Currently, schools are routinely informed whether a child was present during a domestic abuse incident. For high-risk cases, additional context and any 'voice of the child' details recorded within the Public Protection Notice (PPN) are also shared. This represents a significant development in the operation of the scheme.*

*Efforts are ongoing to secure access to education systems, allowing for the rapid and accurate identification of a child's school. This capability is already in place with Redcar & Cleveland, and it is anticipated that all districts will implement similar arrangements. This improvement will reduce delays in notifying schools, as it will no longer be necessary to obtain this information via social services.*

*Additionally, a refined data capture system has been introduced through the new Power BI Operation Encompass page.'*

- 4.106. Regarding identification of at-risk individuals, **Cleveland Police** stressed with its officers the importance of looking for signs of domestic abuse even if attending a property for other reasons. When dealing with a case involving a child, the Committee asked if ages were recorded by officers and, if so, requested a breakdown of age-ranges for incidents across the Borough – this was subsequently provided in January 2026 (see graphic below).

Below relates to the number of children that have been recorded on the Public Protection Notices (PPN) as being present during a domestic abuse incident in Stockton in 2025 (*please note that some children have been present more than once and will be counted each time recorded as present*).

Age	Count
0	149
1	145
2	113
3	151
4	105
5	100

Age	Count
6	89
7	113
8	105
9	118
10	115
11	110

Age	Count
12	96
13	122
14	112
15	125
16	190
17	211

Members were informed that ages were logged and that officers were expected to physically attend a property to assess and record a situation (this report was then checked by other force personnel as part of internal quality control / assurance). It was also confirmed that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were included in the roll-out of domestic abuse-related training.

- 4.107. The Committee asked whether **Thirteen Housing Group** recorded how many of the 664 cases of customers experiencing domestic abuse in the last 12 months involved children / had children within the household. It was acknowledged that this data would need to be broken down for analysis (which would help target resources), and that a dashboard was being developed to assist in this regard. Stockton-on-Tees-specific numbers in relation to the tenancy support data provided was subsequently confirmed – of the 664 cases referenced, 229 pertained to the Borough.

4.108. **SBC Housing Services** stated that those reporting experience of domestic abuse were not forced to respond to questions from service staff, though family / individual backgrounds would be investigated to ascertain relevant details.

4.109. Attention turned to the private housing sector, with Members querying how difficult it was to monitor domestic abuse within this domain. **SBC Housing Services** noted the Selective Licensing areas across the Borough and the requirement under this scheme for landlords to reference all potential new tenants prior to allocating a tenancy. Additionally, over the lifetime of the scheme, Selective Licensing Officers would undertake a home visit to each property. Under new legislation ([Renters' Rights Act](#)) for private rented properties, there would be a requirement for landlords to complete mandatory registration of properties. Assurance was also given that staff working within the SBC Private Sector Housing Team had completed relevant training on safeguarding / domestic abuse.

4.110. **Awareness of how to report domestic abuse and organisational promotion of reporting routes**

Organisation	Response
<p><b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)</b></p> <p>Health Visitors</p>	<p>Staff were able to contact the HDFT safeguarding single point of contact where supervision and advice could be sought regarding next steps / potential referrals. The Trust had good links with Harbour for advice and support, and also had the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence) risk assessment tool that staff could be supported with to inform onward referrals.</p> <p>Reporting routes were shared via training and during 1:1 safeguarding supervision sessions.</p>
<p><b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)</b></p> <p>Maternity</p>	<p>The Trust Safeguarding Team was well recognised across the organisation and staff were made aware of how to contact from the point of induction, through every training level, and through the Trust intranet and bulletins. As well as this, there were posters on how to contact both the team and the IDVA within wards and departments.</p>
<p><b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)</b></p> <p>CAMHS</p>	<p>The TEWV Safeguarding Children Policy outlined domestic abuse as a safeguarding concern and encouraged staff to view children as victims. It highlighted the support staff should access to understand the steps to be taken when concerns were raised (including referral to the Local Authority where appropriate).</p>
<p><b>Primary Care Networks (PCNs)</b></p> <p>Survey Feedback</p>	<p>Of the Borough's four PCNs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Are primary care staff within your network aware of how to report domestic abuse?:</b> Yes – 4; No – 0.</li> <li>• <b>What mechanisms do practices within your network use to promote how to report domestic abuse?:</b> Key themes identified were using a variety of media channels and signposting, staff training and support, regular communication and support, accessible reporting pathways, and commitment to consistency and best practice.</li> <li>• <b>Do practices within your network utilise the clinical system to record concerns relating to domestic abuse and or referrals they make to support agencies?:</b> Yes – 4; No – 0.</li> </ul>

Organisation	Response
<b>Cleveland Police</b>	<p>Significant force-wide emphasis was placed on domestic abuse training so that staff knew how to address incidents (bearing in mind the majority of incidents were reported to Cleveland Police as opposed to reported by it). The force's domestic abuse policy dealt with the responsibilities of each and every individual involved in the domestic abuse process from start to finish – this was regularly reviewed and was currently in the process of being updated to emphasise no crime / no disclosure did not negate submission of a Public Protection Notice (PPN) and other recent developments including the use of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs).</p> <p>The Cleveland Police Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) Hub had developed a decent working relationship with the Vulnerability Desk, and provided advice and support in terms of how they handled domestic abuse risk assessments, particularly in light of the introduction of rapid video response (RVR). All shifts had been visited by PVP staff at least once (giving support in the submission of a PPN), and made it quite clear in all feedback that the office was available to offer advice and support regarding domestic abuse incidents. There were compliance measures within PVP using Power Bi to determine those PPNs that were not submitted timely, with immediate measures taken to identify and process those high-risk incidents. Feedback was given to officers regarding this to improve future submission.</p>
<b>Thirteen Housing Group</b>	<p>One key principle was that victim disclosure alone triggered immediate support (staff did not need to investigate or prove anything) – if someone reported that they were experiencing domestic abuse, Thirteen acted quickly to provide help and signpost to specialist services. Additionally, there were designated domestic abuse 'champions' in every service directorate to drive awareness, and reporting routes were widely promoted via the Thirteen website / social media platforms and through transparent policies.</p>
<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)</b>  Housing Services	<p>All officers visiting private sector housing completed a service 'Safeguarding Visit Form' when they attended a property – this also provided information on how to report abuse. A safeguarding referral would be triggered if a concern was raised.</p>

- 4.111. The Committee asked if there were ever instances where concerns were raised by **HDFT** health visitors but then not backed up via subsequent investigation. Assurance was given that HDFT tried to ensure referral information was comprehensive, and that if a reported case gave no further cause for concern, this would be challenged (demonstrating why risk might still be present). In related matters, Members highlighted the issues that could be caused once a family became aware of a referral being made about it / an associated individual, and also cautioned that a child's view on presenting situations may not necessarily give a true reflection of life within the home, particularly if affected by any underlying health condition they may be experiencing. The value and importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships between health visitors and families was thus emphasised.
- 4.112. The Committee sought confirmation, and was subsequently assured, that **NTHFT** processes allowed for a child to be referred for support should a parent present with / disclose domestic abuse-related issues (figures for this could be provided if required). Members were also informed that posters within Trust departments directed patients to help where needed, and that an initiative existed whereby individuals could discreetly seek support by using a codeword.

- 4.113. The Committee asked **Cleveland Police** about safeguards around data when liaising with other agencies. Members heard that the force adhered to the established data protection rules and also had information-sharing protocols in place – it was therefore confident that sensitive details were not being passed around.
- 4.114. Questions were directed at the benefits of DAPOs and what these brought over and above the court system. **Cleveland Police** stated that these orders had been extremely effective thus far and did not require perpetrators to be charged with a criminal offence (a DAPN could be served whilst a criminal investigation was ongoing). A significant number of orders had been applied for and served within the Cleveland Police footprint this year, and these provided an extra layer of protection for victims and their families. DAPOs could cover zones (not just individual properties) and be indefinite – should an order be breached, the offender would be put before the next court. Importantly, third parties could also apply for an order to be served (e.g. family member, neighbour, social worker) which also included potential positive requirements such as behavioural change programmes.
- 4.115. When reacting to a disclosure of domestic abuse, the Committee felt that there could be a conflict over decisions to move a family away from their household. **Thirteen Housing Group** stated that it would not put barriers in place if such a disclosure was received, but that it was important to look at the wider circumstances (e.g. moving those who had experienced domestic abuse might not be the best solution if their children had made friends (at / outside school) who may be lost if they had to relocate). Confirmation was also given that Thirteen did take third-party referrals of domestic abuse into account (and would sensitively link-in with SBC Housing Services for further exploration).
- 4.116. **Support of staff in relation to domestic abuse (e.g. training course options and any available data on the uptake of these)**

Organisation	Response
<b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)</b>  Health Visitors	Domestic abuse was threaded through all HDFT level 3 safeguarding training in addition to the stand-alone domestic violence training. The Trust also had its safeguarding single point of contact for any staff member to discuss imminent safeguarding concerns.  Furthermore, HDFT facilitated 4x4 supervision which took place on a quarterly basis, though staff were also able to access face-to-face supervision with a Specialist Nurse (Child Protection) if they had concerns about a family.
<b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)</b>  Maternity	Staff were trained in accordance with the Intercollegiate Documents (which included how to make an adult / child referral), as well as on how to complete a DASH assessment. Guidance on MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference – a meeting where information was shared on domestic abuse cases deemed to be high-risk) was available within policy for both sites (the IDVA was available to support with these), and external training offered by partners was also offered and shared via Trust bulletins and internal systems.
<b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)</b>  CAMHS	TEWV supported its workforce in this regard via monthly supervisions for clinical staff, daily huddles (where concerns could be raised and advice sought), and the provision of training around domestic abuse (included in all mandated safeguarding training at levels 1-3, the Durham Tees Valley Care Group compliance rate was 95%). In addition, all teams had good relationships with the Child Safeguarding Team / Leads, and had access to domestic abuse basic awareness training delivered by a MARAC specialist advisor.

Organisation	Response
<b>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB)</b>	Staff roles and responsibilities in safeguarding were defined by the NHS England Safeguarding Accountability and Assurance Framework (SAAF). Healthcare staff must be trained to identify domestic abuse signs and understand referral pathways for victim support, and it was acknowledged that training needed to be continuous and tailored to specific staff roles to ensure confident and appropriate responses to safeguarding issues. Effective monitoring ensured compliance and maintained safeguarding as a priority across all organisational levels.
<b>Primary Care Networks (PCNs)</b>  Survey Feedback	Of the Borough's four PCNs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Is domestic abuse training promoted to staff within your network?:</b> Yes – 4; No – 0.</li> <li>• <b>Are primary care staff within your network aware of local domestic abuse services?:</b> Yes – 3; No – 1.</li> <li>• <b>Would primary care staff within your network benefit from promotion of the local service offer provided by Harbour?:</b> Yes – 4; No – 0.</li> <li>• <b>Are practices aware of the Local GP Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA)?:</b> Yes – 1; No – 3. Feedback from the one PCN which answered 'yes' on the effectiveness of the IDVA arrangement was positive.</li> </ul>
<b>Cleveland Police</b>	Skills in relation to this issue were enhanced by the roll-out of Domestic Abuse Matters (DA Matters) training to all officers and staff. Developed with SafeLives and the College of Policing, this programme focused on recognising coercive / controlling behaviour and improving cultural attitudes. Over 1,500 personnel had completed the training thus far which aimed to give staff the confidence to recognise domestic abuse and respond compassionately (though it was acknowledged that challenges remained in consistently identifying subtle signs like psychological abuse).
<b>Thirteen Housing Group</b>	Thirteen provided clear internal guidance and mandatory training for its near-1,500 workforce, with the latter tailored to the needs of an individual's respective role within the organisation (e.g. front-facing staff received more in-depth, face-to-face training, while back-office personnel completed e-learning modules to ensure they understood their responsibilities).
<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)</b>  Housing Services	SBC aimed to ensure all team members received sufficient training so they felt confident in identifying signs of domestic abuse (levels of training varied depending on role). All new starters had to complete 'Introduction to Safeguarding' training and each team member was required to refresh this training every two years.  The service was currently reviewing its employee training and development plans. Rather than encouraging colleagues to attend Safeguarding Adult and Children's refresher training (every two years), it was intended to make this mandatory for all SBC Housing and A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees team members (regardless of role). Wider Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) training courses were shared with Service Managers who reviewed and identified suitable training for staff.

4.117. Acknowledging the demands on the workforce, the Committee questioned whether **HDFT** experienced any significant absenteeism by health visitors due to the cases they were involved with. It was stated that the Trust recognised the importance of staff wellbeing and that employees were well supported. Whilst the health visitor role was a stressful one, there was not a high absence / sickness rate.

- 4.118. Responding to the Committee’s observation regarding three **PCNs** not being aware of the local GP IDVA, the GP Partner in attendance spoke of the very positive impact they and their patients had experienced via this arrangement. Within their own practice, the GP IDVA worked with social prescribers and gave individuals who otherwise may have felt stigmatised by having to walk into a support service the opportunity to raise concerns relating to domestic abuse within the safe space of the practice (also providing examples of solutions to enable the individual to be seen on their own by creating opportunities to divert the abusive partner). The benefits of all the Borough’s practices utilising the IDVA resource were emphasised.
- 4.119. Clarity was sought on whether **Cleveland Police** call-handlers were trained to listen to background noise for any clues of domestic abuse (as ambulance staff were reportedly skilled in doing). The Committee was informed that the force had the facility to listen back to a call so any signs of abuse could be retrospectively identified, and it was subsequently confirmed that initial training for call handlers included specific inputs regarding listening to background noise and recording observations on the police log.
- 4.120. The Committee welcomed the **Thirteen Housing Group** emphasis on providing training for its staff on this issue and sought assurance that confidentiality was maintained if someone reported a domestic abuse incident. Thirteen stated that any approach to its services would be recorded as a contact, but that if it was domestic abuse-related, the contact would be locked down in a sensitive area of their system (i.e. with restricted access). Replying to a subsequent Member query, it was confirmed that staff knew how to escalate any concerns around domestic abuse to a named individual (whose details were shared with the workforce).
- 4.121. **Responsible person / role within the organisation regarding written safeguarding policies / training / submitting referrals**

Organisation	Response
<b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)</b> Health Visitors	The HDFT Head of Safeguarding was responsible for the Trust’s domestic abuse policy (which was current, accessible and user-friendly). Delivery of training at HDFT was the responsibility of the Specialist Nurses and Named Nurses (in accordance with the Intercollegiate Document), and 0-19 staff could also attend external training delivered by partner agencies. Any staff member within the 0-19 service could make a referral if they suspected domestic abuse.
<b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)</b> Maternity	Whilst the executive leadership sat with the Group Chief Nursing Officer, the Group Associate Director of Safeguarding had overall responsibility for safeguarding policy and practice, and for ensuring standards and availability of training delivery. The Trust promoted a ‘safeguarding is everyone’s business’ principle, and it was expected that each staff member was responsible for ensuring their own mandatory training completion (monitored through appraisal). Collective compliance data was provided to each senior manager within clinical areas.
<b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)</b> CAMHS	Not answered.
<b>Cleveland Police</b>	The responsibilities for domestic abuse and child safeguarding were overseen by Superintendent Strategic Leads who, as portfolio leads, had overall responsibility for policy, training and referrals.
<b>Thirteen Housing Group</b>	Not answered.

4.122. **Data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made in the last three years**

Organisation	Response														
<p><b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)</b></p> <p>Health Visitors</p>	<p>HDFT did not capture individual data like this.</p> <p>The Trust would be able to see the volume of referrals made by the 0-19 service, but not for specific reasons.</p>														
<p><b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT)</b></p> <p>Maternity</p>	<p>A comparison between referral data before and after the IDVA post was installed demonstrated the increase in victims receiving support:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Received 01/04/2018 – 31/03/2020 with the category of referrer "Hospital" (2 year period <b>before the IDVA post</b>).</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Location</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Number of referrals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Stockton</td> <td>39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hartlepool</td> <td>58</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Middlesbrough</td> <td>13</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><b>Since the Hospital IDVA has been in post</b>, the number of referrals from the Hospital to the IDVA/harbour over the most recent 2 year period is as follows.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Location</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Number of referrals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hartlepool and Stockton</td> <td>277</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Middlesbrough</td> <td>218</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Location	Number of referrals	Stockton	39	Hartlepool	58	Middlesbrough	13	Location	Number of referrals	Hartlepool and Stockton	277	Middlesbrough	218
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<p><b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)</b></p> <p>CAMHS</p>	<p>Tees Valley-wide data showed a recent increase in the rate of recorded safeguarding concerns involving domestic abuse – 131 from April 2024 to March 2025 (12 months), compared to 71 from April 2025 to August 2025 (5 months). Only one case had been reported to the police for each of these periods, though all cases since April 2025 had multi-agency liaison (compared to 83% in 2024-25).</p>														
<p><b>Cleveland Police</b></p>	<p>The CHUB would be able to provide this data.</p>														
<p><b>Thirteen Housing Group</b></p>	<p>Not answered.</p>														
<p><b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)</b></p> <p>Housing Services</p>	<p>Regarding domestic abuse-related referrals made by SBC Housing Services, whilst referrals were made, the service did not record the number.</p>														

4.123. The Committee referenced the **HDFT** response to the request for data on the number of domestic abuse-related referrals made by health visitors in the last three years, and asked how the Trust satisfied itself that it was carrying out its part in identifying, and then making referrals for, those who were experiencing domestic abuse. HDFT personnel reiterated that only overall numbers of referrals were recorded, not the reasons why – however, qualitative (deep dive) work was

undertaken around specific cases which could identify issues. Members were reminded that the initial presentation by SBC officers at the Committee meeting in July 2025 stated that health visitors had made 22 domestic abuse-related referrals to the Stockton-on-Tees CHUB during the 2024-2025 period (see paragraph 4.81) – a request followed for any further available data on referrals made by health visitors to the Stockton-on-Tees CHUB for the last few years (overall numbers, as well as a breakdown of those which were domestic abuse-related if possible), with additional information subsequently provided:

*'There were 164 SAFER referrals made from Oct 23-Oct 25 – I would need to access each of these records to determine the reason for referral. Data has always been an issue as it is a patient health record so often not set up like other systems to collect data in the way that it is requested. The referral form used is multi-purpose, so not just for referrals to social care but early help and other services too.'*

- 4.124. Regarding the **NTHFT** figures, the Committee asked that the stated number of referrals for Hartlepool and Stockton (277) following the introduction of the Hospital IDVA post be separated out so Stockton-only data could be established – the Trust subsequently confirmed that the 277 referrals were split 196 for Stockton and 84 for Hartlepool for the 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2025 period (taken from the Hospital IDVAs database).
- 4.125. A number of requests were made to **TEWV** for further information – this related to 1) any data on the numbers of children accessing CAMHS who were victim-survivors of domestic abuse over the last three years, 2) any data on which organisations were referring into CAMHS, and 3) the percentage of children referred to CAMHS who a) the service went on to engage with, and b) were referred to another agency. The Committee was informed that domestic abuse-specific data may be difficult to provide as this would often not be the principal reason for a referral (though may be one of several factors), with TEWV subsequently providing the following:

*'I have reviewed your request for additional information by linking in with both our data and safeguarding teams and can confirm that we are unable to fulfil your request for additional information as this is not data that we monitor as a young person would not be referred solely as result of Domestic violence. We are linked in with all of the Domestic abuse / safeguarding processes across Teesside and have also agreed to link in with the SBC Strategic Health & Wellbeing Manager for additional support as required. The data that we do collate is specific to Mental health which is our primary business.'*

- 4.126. The Committee asked why **SBC Housing Services** did not log the referrals it made in relation to domestic abuse. Officers stated that safeguarding concerns were escalated through a specific route, with staff trained to make referrals where appropriate. Service audits identified if a referral should have been made or, if one had been made, whether it was done in a timely manner. Furthermore, any homelessness case was considered for safeguarding (this had to be documented).
- 4.127. In addition to the above tables and the subsequent comments / responses from the Committee, views from the Borough's **early years providers** (nurseries, childminders, breakfast / after-school clubs) were also sought in relation to the identification of at-risk individuals / families, awareness of reporting routes (and experience of these processes if concerns had been reported), and the provision of domestic abuse training. A Committee survey was issued to this sector in late-2025, with responses submitted from:

- 14 nurseries
- 1 breakfast / after-school / holiday club
- 1 childminder

**Appendix 1** shows the feedback received, with selected comments including:

- How do you / staff within your service identify at-risk individuals / families?

*'Up-to-date on training, communicate with families, observing child's behaviour and wellbeing, observing parent and carer behaviour, listening to disclosures and dealing with them correctly.'*

*'Staff are trained to notice signs and also working closely with families, building up relationships to ensure if there are any changes or signs we are more aware to these. Staff also work closely with external agencies so that we have an holistic approach with families and share information.'*

*'Observation of parents / carers, children, their everyday conversations, mannerisms, play. Changes in their demeanour. Conversation.'*

*'Strong partnership with parents / families. Clear and consistent communication. Always available and open to chat with parents and families, open and warming to chat and develop strong bonds. Extra vigilant at all times. I receive as much background information as possible through visits before starting at the setting, time away from my open hours to be able to talk with families and also identify any other services that may already be involved with the family.'*

- How confident are you / they about spotting signs of domestic abuse when working with young children?

*'I feel like the majority of the team are really confident at spotting signs of domestic abuse and following procedures if needed. Some of the team are awaiting more training as they are new to the setting and are not as knowledgeable yet.'*

*'I don't think this is something practitioners are particularly confident with. Although they know the signs due to the area we are in, I believe this is something that would be covered up as the families are all professionals and do not fit the stereotype of a family affected by abuse.'*

*'I think the more experienced staff would be confident, and happy to raise concerns. I think newer staff would be a little unsure.'*

*'This is never a clear-cut answer. I believe I am confident that my staff are up to date with training and know the generic signs and symptoms to look out for in behaviour of parents and children. Strong parent partnerships emphasise early identification too. However, I cannot say for definite that cases wouldn't slip through the net.'*

- If your service has reported signs of domestic abuse in the past, how did you find the process?

*'We would like to be informed more explicitly to ensure we have the correct links.'*

*'All safeguarding concerns are passed onto to our designated safeguarding officers who will start the process, whilst we support the family. The process of reporting has been straightforward, although it can be emotional for the families and the staff supporting them. I feel that our calm steady presence has helped the family be open to accepting help.'*

- Do you / staff within your service access domestic abuse training?

All respondents answered 'yes' (apart from two nurseries which did not answer).

- Are you / staff within your service aware of local domestic abuse services?

All respondents answered 'yes' (apart from two nurseries and 1 breakfast / after-school / holiday club which answered 'no').

## Capturing / acting upon the voice of the child

### Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC)

<https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/>

- 4.128. Dame Nicole Jacobs began the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) role in 2019 which was granted additional powers in 2021. With regional offices across the UK, the Commissioner had published a '[Victims in their own right? Babies, children and young people's experience of domestic abuse](#)' policy paper in April 2025 (updated in October 2025) which reflected the voice of those children and young people who had experienced domestic abuse. Outcomes from a '[Tell Nicole](#)' project were also published at this time.
- 4.129. The '[Victims in their own right?](#)' report reinforced the importance of seeking and considering the voice of children, though also recognised that this was not always a straightforward task:

*'Giving a voice to and working with children subject to domestic abuse can be difficult, as children may harbour mistrust of professionals, rooted in fear, or previous breaches of confidentiality and/or poor support. Children and young people can be articulate, strategic and reflexive communicators, and support must enable space for children and young people's voice to be heard. Children need time to build relationships with professionals and be able to trust them. The NSPCC briefing paper 'Voice of the child' sets out common barriers to including the voice of the child effectively and highlighted the ways in which a child's voice can be understood, especially when working with babies, pre-verbal children and children with disabilities.'*

*'Statutory services must collaborate to understand the needs, desires and voice of the child in any decision making.'*

*'Attempts to silence or quieten the voice of the child are unacceptable. Yet many children and young people, via Tell Nicole, say that they did not feel listened to when important decisions were being made about contact with family members.'*



- 4.130. The Committee sought a contribution from the DAC Office but was informed that this could not be facilitated due to current capacity constraints and the fact that it was a small team (indeed, they were stepping back from some external engagement). The Committee was, however, signposted to the Government's official response to its '[Victims in their own right?](#)' report (see [Government response to the report 'Victims in their own right?' - GOV.UK](#)).

## Harbour

- 4.131. Making the child or young person central to the story being told was paramount to everything Harbour did. No child was too young to have a voice, and it was vital to think creatively about how to involve them so a real understanding of what made their day good or not so good could be ascertained. Observing and recording behaviour and experiences was key (in particular, interactions between a child and their parents / carers, and whether there was any difference in their interactions with other people), as was thinking about outcomes. All Harbour staff, regardless of role, undertook 'voice of the child' core training, and regular consultations were held with children and young people to help inform future practice.
- 4.132. Harbour worked closely with the DAC Office, and local children and young people were involved in the 'Tell Nicole' project. Through subsequently published creative pieces of work, they highlighted what support they found helpful, what needed to improve, and what changes they would like to see that would help children in the future. The DAC and her team came to visit local children and young people who took part, to thank them for their involvement, and to share with them the next steps and the commitments to child victims of domestic abuse.
- 4.133. The Committee offered congratulations for the local input into the published 'Tell Nicole' report. Noting that the children and young people involved in this project felt heard, Members stated that this review could also help accentuate the voices of those who had experienced domestic abuse. SBC officers added that the Council was investigating the possibility of using some of the artwork from local children and young people within its buildings.

### Effectiveness of local services / arrangements and areas for future focus

- 4.134. The Committee was keen to ascertain views on the effectiveness of local arrangements in relation to domestic abuse and give an opportunity for stakeholders to highlight any existing challenges that needed to be addressed in relation to this scrutiny topic.

## Harbour

- 4.135. Key areas for consideration included the need to understand the impact of the new social care transformation, the need for specialist roles in social care settings, and ongoing funding challenges (i.e. the Hospital IDVA role may come to an end in March 2026, though conversations were ongoing with health partners in relation to this). Given Stockton-on-Tees currently had the highest referral rate into Harbour across the areas in which it operated, continuing education and awareness-raising around domestic abuse and its impact on children and young people was crucial (this was not yet consistent across the Borough). There was also a specific need to look at what was being delivered within schools around this issue.
- 4.136. The Committee sought views on why Stockton-on-Tees had the highest referral rate into Harbour. Ongoing awareness-raising of domestic abuse was seen as a principal factor which had likely led to a rise in reported cases. Ultimately, organisations were trying to break the cycle of this type of abuse, though it was acknowledged that this was difficult. In response, the Committee asked how success was measured in relation to the interventions used – Harbour confirmed it had a monitoring / evaluation team and highlighted case studies to demonstrate success (examples were subsequently shared with the Committee), with SBC officers commenting that contract management data was showing an increase in the number of perpetrators completing interventions and that support was effective.

### Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT): Health Visitors

4.137. Trust staff reported positive experiences of working with partners, and a HDFT Named Nurse sat on the local safeguarding partnership, with the Trust accessing training provided through this function (the benefits of multi-agency training, offering the ability to reflect with other agencies, were noted). In terms of strengthening arrangements, PiTstop being a part of the new 'front door' was highlighted, as was consideration towards receiving *Operation Encompass* notifications (though these would be for information to inform cumulative risk only, so would need to unpick impact of this).

### North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT): Maternity

- 4.138. There was strength in working across both safeguarding partnerships (adults and children's), together with community safety, in order to tackle some of the challenges related to domestic abuse as it straddled all three and affected all ages. As a provider, it was a challenge working across multiple Local Authorities, especially for children as the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) worked well to encompass all.
- 4.139. Funding for domestic abuse within health settings, as well as across partnerships, was both limited and inconsistent. Also, the allocation from central government did not reflect the needs of the area.
- 4.140. The Trust IDVA post was at risk because Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Cleveland funding ended in March 2026. IRIS (a general practice-based domestic violence and abuse training, support, and referral programme) supported primary care with identification and seeking help for victims, however, this was not consistently funded. MARAC was not statutory, therefore it was harder for agencies to gain resource to support the process when other statutory duties took precedence. Integration and unification of clinical records systems was required in order to facilitate better recognition and support for victims, as well as better risk information-sharing.
- 4.141. Trust representatives were asked if they felt the overarching local 'system' was operating effectively in terms of identifying and responding to domestic abuse. In response, challenges in relation to the IDVA funding and MARAC not being statutory were reiterated, with financial shortfalls meaning organisations needed to prioritise their statutory duties. Whilst NTHFT shared information and took actions, many health organisations were unable to physically attend meetings due to the length and frequency. Regarding the IDVA situation, it was also noted that published joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) reports on the multi-agency response to children and families needing help in [Redcar & Cleveland](#) and [North Yorkshire](#) had highlighted the importance of health IDVAs.

### Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV): CAMHS

4.142. In general (not specific to domestic abuse), staff reported positive working relationships with SBC, noting reliability, effective communication, being a voice around the table, and responsiveness. Key areas of future focus should be understanding / recognising partner roles, responsibilities and expertise, as well as understanding service limitations (organisations had specialisms and could not cover everything).

### NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB)

4.143. The [Researching Effective Approaches for Children \(REACH\) Plan](#) (2024-2029), led by Foundations – What Works Centre for Children & Families, aimed to identify and evaluate effective programmes to prevent domestic abuse and support child victims. ICBs were expected to collaborate in identifying, testing and scaling interventions across healthcare settings, and

following investment of £75 million over five years, the focus was on prevention, early identification, and recovery support for children affected by domestic abuse.

4.144. [IRIS](#) and [ADVISE](#) programmes were being expanded to support ICBs in embedding domestic abuse identification and referral pathways in general practice and sexual health clinics, with a focus on early intervention, clinician training, and direct referral to domestic abuse specialists.

4.145. The Committee asked how the NENC ICB monitored / assured itself that learning around domestic abuse cases involving children was appropriately shared / acted upon by those organisations it commissioned. In response, it was stated that learning was shared and discussed within established safeguarding and safety partnerships, with the NENC ICB Safeguarding Designated Nurse later confirming that:

*'We have implemented a quarterly thematic learning group with NENC ICB which compiles all of the learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) / Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews (DARDRs) / Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Learning Reviews / Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs). We meet for the first time later this month. The aim of the group is to explore the frequency across our 14 Local Authorities footprint that themes emerge – then what actions are taken or products developed to address the themes. We will develop a secure digital repository to enable our learning community to access and hopefully avoid duplication. We also compile a monthly publication.'*

4.146. Members noted a lack of reference to the commissioning of mental health trusts within the information submitted and queried how these organisations were monitored when it came to domestic abuse policies / practice. Assurance was given that all commissioned providers should have a service specification which included up-to-date considerations around statutory obligations (safeguarding being a key feature of NHS contracts). A statement in relation to service monitoring was later provided:

*'Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV) have their own domestic abuse procedure and safeguarding policies which this would fall under from a monitoring perspective; these would be discussed at the Trust's internal Quality Assurance Group (QuAG), which a Director of Safeguarding attends from the ICB. Therefore, we have oversight of any issues, etc. Anything relating to staff or patients should be going through the safeguarding route.'*

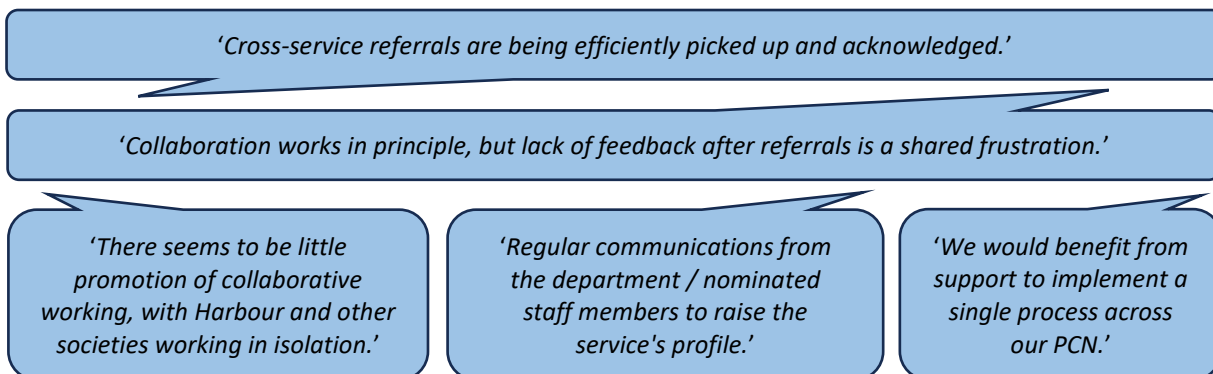
*'TEWVs, like all NHS providers, contract outlines the NHS requirements in respect of Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). They are part of the Children Safeguarding Partnership which facilitates case audits which TEWV fully engage with, most recent summer 2025. Redcar JTAI was just prior to this and TEWV were fully engaged. TEWV have an internal safeguarding committee, DA, etc. as above are all an integral part of the portfolio and assurance is discussed in that setting, NENC ICB have a place at the table and currently one of our experience Designated Nurses attends, and her role is to scrutinise the assurance provided. NHS England (NHSE) requires all providers to complete the Safeguarding Assurance Framework (SAF). NHSE requires NENC ICB to maintain the NHSE Tracker upon which all DARDRs are entered (along with themes) and this is monitored.'*

4.147. The NENC ICB Strategic Head of Commissioning (Tees Valley) informed the Committee of the need for professionals to be able to identify the reasons for patient behaviour, not just see / treat the behaviour itself. Members were then notified of plans for a forthcoming complex trauma team (hosted by Stockton-on-Tees) which would work with a small number of complex cases involving young people. Funded jointly by the ICB and the five Tees Valley Local Authorities, the team was due to be operational from April 2026 and would add to the local offer and support the national Family First Partnership Programme (FFPP) – it was subsequently confirmed that this was recurrent funding and that there were no known examples of a similar team elsewhere in the country.

## Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

4.148. Responses to the relevant survey questions from the Borough's four PCNs:

- Do practices within your network feel there is effective collaborative working with Stockton Borough Council and NHS partners regarding domestic violence?: Yes – 1; No – 3.



- Are there any key areas that your network would like scrutiny to focus on in future in relation to this topic: Proposals included better interoperability / communication between agencies; enhanced training and education (e.g. 'child behind the adult'), multi-disciplinary safeguarding training, and 0-19 service attendance at safeguarding meetings (possibly at PCN level); ensuring the current referrals to both CHUB and the Adult equivalent remain in place as they are working. Regarding potential opportunities moving forward:

### **Enhanced Collaboration and Communication/ Feedback following referral**

- While collaboration with agencies like Harbour and Stockton Borough Council exists, feedback highlights that collaborative working can at times be fragmented, with lack of feedback after referrals and a desire from practices for better communication between agencies to ensure cases are followed up and outcomes are communicated.

### **Increased Visibility and Engagement with IDVA**

- The presence of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) is valued, but not all practices have met the IDVA directly, which may be limiting engagement and the role's impact. This could be resolved by regular, direct meetings between IDVAs and practices to embed the IDVA role more fully into daily safeguarding work.

### **Ongoing Training, promotion and Awareness**

- Whilst there was good awareness amongst practices there was a call for constant refresher awareness training and more multi-disciplinary safeguarding training, including topics like "Child behind the adult" and attendance from 0–19 services at safeguarding meetings.
- Regular promotion of local service offers and reporting pathways through internal communications, meetings, and digital platforms would be welcomed.

### **Improved Use of Digital Tools and Communication Channels**

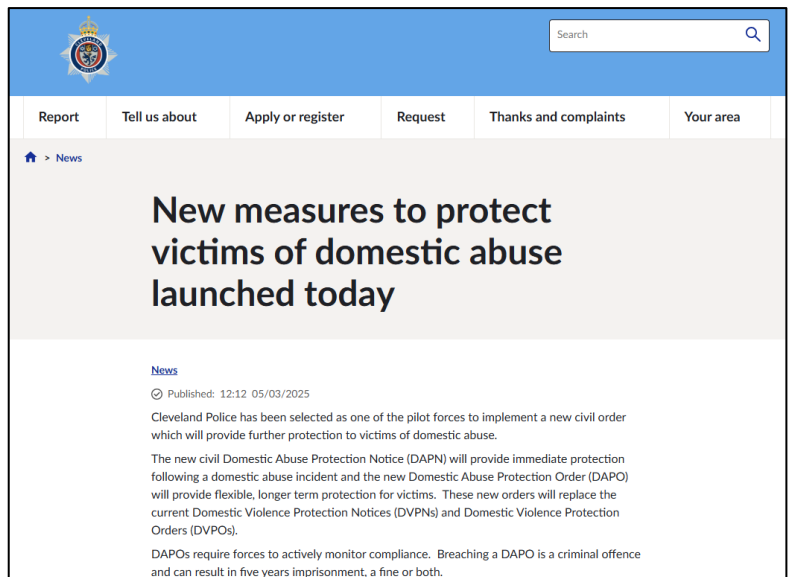
- Practices use a range of mechanisms (e.g., clinical coding, safeguarding registers, patient alerts, posters, websites, TeamNet) to identify and support at-risk individuals. Practices could share best practice about how they promote services to provide peer support and to identify potential opportunities of standardised process for identifying and responding to domestic abuse (recognising practices are independent businesses).

4.149. The Committee sought views on what single development within general practices might have the most significant impact in identifying and / or managing domestic abuse-related cases involving children. Addressing Members, a GP Partner drew attention to their experience in using the personal list system – a highly valued arrangement which enabled a patient to be seen by the same GP, allowing relationships to be developed and family backgrounds to be established. However, as individual businesses, practices had differing operating models / staffing structures which may not make it possible to adopt a similar approach.

## Cleveland Police

4.150. The partnership arrangements were currently split across north and south Tees; however, they often covered the same themes and issues which occurred across Tees. Looking ahead, a central team structure would cut down on duplicity and make things more streamlined – this would also mean learning and good practice was shared on a Tees-wide basis.

4.151. Several developments likely to impact upon this scrutiny topic were highlighted, including the Families First (Children’s Social Care Reform) initiative, the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 – Section 20 implementation (police must notify schools if a child was suspected to be a victim of domestic abuse), and the continued expansion of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This was in addition to the new DAPOs (Cleveland Police was a pilot force for this 2025 national scheme), as well as the Tees-wide Domestic Abuse [Perpetration Strategy](#) (a 10-year plan to reduce repeat offending and improve multi-agency collaboration, it aligned with the Government’s commitment to halve violence against women and girls over the next decade).



4.152. Noting discussions at previous evidence-gathering sessions for this review, the Committee asked about the force’s relations with Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). Members heard that these were strong and that IDVAs played an invaluable support role outside criminal investigations (indeed, one was embedded within the Cleveland Police control room).

4.153. The Committee queried what single development would make the biggest difference in terms of local domestic abuse matters from a police perspective. Increasing awareness of applying for a DAPO so this was not always a force-led process (particularly given not everyone reported abuse to the police) was identified as a key aim moving forward – this was another avenue of support for victims which all organisations could better utilise.

## Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP)

4.154. HSSCP received an annual assurance report from the local Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) in September 2025 which provided strong confidence regarding the effectiveness of arrangements, demonstrating that agencies from across the system were working to prevent, intervene early, and respond to domestic abuse. As previously indicated (see paragraph 4.75), the HSSCP domestic abuse-themed audit identified where current arrangements could be further strengthened.

- 4.155. There was an indicator in the HSSCP Performance Management Framework (PMF) around attendance from each agency at multi-agency meetings, however, this was not broken down specifically to domestic abuse. There were partnership escalation processes in place that enabled any professional to challenge another agency should there be concerns regarding attendance at multi-agency meetings or around contributions to assessment and planning – no issues regarding this had been escalated to the HSSCP Executive.
- 4.156. As per the HSSCP domestic abuse-themed audit, existing challenges and future areas of focus were on how professionals could be supported to work together to effectively engage when a perpetrator was high-risk, and how approaches could be strengthened to recognise risk, hold the perpetrator to account, partner with the victim, and keep the child at the centre.
- 4.157. The effectiveness of perpetrator programmes was raised, and Members heard that whilst HSSCPs domestic abuse audit had demonstrated examples of success, areas for improvement were also identified (e.g. tools / models which could be used).
- 4.158. Views were requested on what single development / change in relation to this scrutiny topic HSSCP would like to see as a result of the Committee’s review. Communication around this issue (e.g. highlighting the impact of domestic abuse on children and the support available for children, their families and perpetrators) was subsequently emphasised, along with a need to hold perpetrators to account and also focus on ‘significant others’ (including those who may be causing problems to a household even if not living there). That said, the HSSCP Chair felt both awareness and reporting of domestic abuse had improved (helped by changes in legislation which had increased focus on the child), and confirmed that there were no concerns around attendance and engagement in relation to those agencies who were involved in the partnership.

### Thirteen Housing Group

- 4.159. There was a strong relationship between Thirteen’s Domestic Abuse Team and SBC Housing and Homelessness Services, with regular collaboration on domestic abuse cases, and mirrored banding processes to prevent victim-survivors having to undergo two separate assessments. Thirteen was also an active participant in the Domestic Abuse Strategic (Steering) Group, was newly involved in the Teesside Perpetrator Strategic Group, and was exploring opportunities to link-in on target hardening provision in Stockton-on-Tees.
- 4.160. Key areas for future consideration around domestic abuse included the ongoing challenges posed by under-reporting due to stigma and fear among victims (particularly older customers), having to tackle complex needs (requiring multi-agency responses), and managing both funding and housing pressures (limited safe accommodation options could increase risk for victims). Digital abuse was an emerging issue, with perpetrators using technology for harassment and control, whilst national developments (e.g. Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, and upcoming Criminal Justice reforms) would shape the approach to this form of abuse. Moving forward, priorities should include improving early identification, enhancing role-specific training, better data-sharing between agencies, improving safeguarding for children affected by domestic abuse, and expanding perpetrator programmes to reduce repeat offending.
- 4.161. Thirteen was asked for its views on what single issue was of most significance from their perspective in relation to this scrutiny topic – recognition that moving domestic abuse victims away from their existing residence was not always the best option and having access to robust data were both highlighted. A query was also raised around Thirteen’s experience of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs), with the following statement later provided to the Committee:

*'Overall, DAPOs are proving to be a positive and effective tool in supporting victim safety. They are helping to clearly set boundaries for perpetrators, improve understanding of expectations, and in many cases enable victims to remain safely in their own homes rather than being forced to relocate. While there are areas where the process could be strengthened, DAPOs are an important additional deterrent and safeguarding measure.'*

*Feedback from our Domestic Abuse Team included a case where we were able to prevent a perpetrator from gaining entry to a property, despite him being a joint tenant. At the time, the victim was staying in refuge accommodation and the perpetrator was attempting to return to the home. The DAPO clearly prohibited him from being at the property, which meant he could not return and avoided the need for the locks to be changed. The perpetrator was later arrested for being in the area and is currently on remand in prison pending a court date for breach of the DAPO, and also received a fine. This demonstrates how effective enforcement of a DAPO can be in protecting the victim and reducing immediate housing intervention.*

*More generally, where a customer has a DAPO in place, both the victim and the perpetrator appear to be better informed about how the order works. This increased understanding is helping to reinforce boundaries and, importantly, supporting victims to remain in their homes rather than having to move away for their own safety. However, there are ongoing safeguarding concerns in some cases. There have been situations where a DAPO is in place and the perpetrator has breached it on more than one occasion, yet they have not been remanded in custody. Although the perpetrator is arrested each time, they are released again while awaiting a CPS decision, during which time they continue to attend the victim's home and breach the DAPO further. This approach does not sufficiently safeguard the victim and creates ongoing risk and anxiety. This issue needs further consideration and review.*

*Another challenge is that we are not always aware whether positive requirements have been attached to a DAPO. Additionally, these positive requirements are not mandatory and rely on voluntary engagement by the alleged perpetrator. DAPO cases are also not automatically referred into MARAC, which limits multi-agency oversight. Moving forward, it would be beneficial if positive requirements became mandatory, particularly where the perpetrator is a tenant. This would allow housing providers to take stronger and more consistent enforcement action where requirements are not adhered to.*

*In summary, DAPOs are another important deterrent that strengthens protection for victims. While they are not perfect and would benefit from some refinement, they are a positive step forward in safeguarding practice and victim support.'*

## **Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) Housing Services**

- 4.162. The Government had recently published the policy paper, [A National Plan to End Homelessness](#) (Dec 25), with section 3.4.7 including a specific reference to domestic abuse. A related toolkit was being developed – SBC would consider and respond to this once published.
- 4.163. The service was looking to explore how it could support children who may be placed in temporary accommodation when a homelessness presentation was made (regardless of the reason for the presentation) and would be meeting with Family Action to see how this support could be facilitated. As requested by the Committee, feedback was subsequently provided on the outcome of these discussions which saw areas of collaboration agreed in relation to widening opportunities for referrals to Family Action, the provision of a 'learning lunch' for SBC Housing Services staff, and support with framing conversation with parents. Family Action would also share leaflets / publicity material (currently being refreshed).
- 4.164. SBC officers were asked what single change would make the biggest impact around this scrutiny topic from a housing perspective. Maximising the number of victims coming forward so that appropriate support could be provided, and to encourage all Registered Providers (with stock in the Borough) to let their properties by advertising via Tees Valley Home Finder (TVHF), was encouraged.

## Early Years Providers

4.165. The Committee survey issued to the Borough's early years providers (nurseries, childminders, breakfast / after-school clubs) in late-2025 included questions on any experience of working with local domestic abuse services, whether any guidance / communication was received to assist in identifying / supporting children who have experienced domestic abuse, and what should be the key areas of future focus in relation to this scrutiny topic. **Appendix 1** shows the feedback received, with selected comments including:

- **Have you had any experience of working with local domestic abuse services?**

Six respondents (all nurseries) answered 'yes'; 10 respondents (eight nurseries, one breakfast / after-school / holiday club, and one childminder) answered 'no'.

*'We've had families join our setting who've used the services of Harbour; we've not been involved in any referrals or assessments for it, but helped support families and their children.'*

*'When speaking with a family who has been through this, they were recommended services such as Harbour and CGL. The Family Hub offer lots of advice and support.'*

*'I have worked with Harbour for some parents to make sure that they are getting the help they needed. They were referred in by a Social Worker, but I feel confident I could refer in if needed.'*

- **Do you receive any guidance / communications from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and / or other local organisations to assist you in identifying / supporting children who have experienced domestic abuse?**

Nine respondents (eight nurseries and one childminder) answered 'yes'; six respondents (five nurseries and one breakfast / after-school / holiday club) answered 'no'.

- **What should be the key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic?**

*'Training from the Local Authority, if available, and sharing of experiences, sharing ideas and how to address situations like this.'*

*'Hidden abuse in professional working families and breaking the stereotype.'*

*'Increased specialist domestic abuse training, particularly focused on early years and young children. Greater awareness of local support pathways for families. Earlier intervention and prevention work with families.'*

*'Breaking down barriers to disclosing and reporting domestic violence. More in-depth training. More safe spaces identified for families to disclose abuse and gain information.'*

*'I believe this is still a taboo subject and should be talked about more in all meetings across early years. A more refined step-by-step approach to reporting and supporting parents, children and families.'*

*'Adverse childhood experiences that may be caused through parents / families experiencing domestic abuse. What to do if we suspect abuse but no consent given from parents to refer them to services.'*

## Other Developments

4.166. Recent multi-agency inspections had concluded that domestic abuse practice across inspected areas was not sufficiently child-focused, resulting in delayed or inadequate protection and support for children. Agencies continued to rely too heavily on non-abusing parents – predominantly mothers – to keep children safe and did not consistently recognise children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, despite this status being enshrined in law through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. These findings were set out in [The multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK](#) report summarising joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) conducted by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, and HM Inspectorate of Probation. The inspections reviewed responses to unborn children and children aged 0-7 affected by domestic abuse and followed similar inspections undertaken in 2017, with inspectors finding insufficient improvement since that time.

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website interface. At the top left is the GOV.UK logo. On the right, there is a 'Menu' dropdown and a search icon. Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Parenting, childcare and children's services > Safeguarding and social care for children > Safeguarding and child protection > The multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse. Below the breadcrumb trail are links to 'Ofsted', 'Care Quality Commission', 'HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services', and 'His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation'. The main content area features a blue banner with the text 'Research and analysis' and the title 'The multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse' in large white font. Below the title, it says 'Published 21 January 2026'. At the bottom of the banner, it states 'Applies to England'.

4.167. Between October 2024 and June 2025, inspectorates visited six Local Authority areas – Hertfordshire, Hillingdon, Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Reading, and Redcar & Cleveland. They assessed multi-agency practice across four areas:

- Identification of child victims of domestic abuse
- Assessment, planning and decision making
- Protection, support and care for children at risk or harmed
- Prevention of future victimisation

Inspectors tracked the experiences of hundreds of children, undertook detailed reviews of 36 cases, spoke directly with children and families, and worked with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office to gather national feedback from survivors and parents.

4.168. Key findings contained within the report were as follows:

- **Persistent Failure to Recognise Children as Victims and Prevention Work:** Inspectors found a consistent pattern of children being viewed as passive witnesses or indirect victims, rather than as individuals experiencing harm. Only 8% of parents surveyed reported their children being treated as victims in their own right. This failure led to poor risk recognition, delays in strategy discussions, and insufficient protective action. This was particularly for pre-verbal children, unborn babies, or where mothers minimised or did not disclose abuse.

National data reinforced these findings. In the year ending 31 March 2025, domestic abuse involving a parent was the second most common factor in Child in Need assessments (162,890 cases), yet concerns recorded about children as victims were significantly lower (57,930 cases). This disparity persists despite legal recognition of children as victims since October 2021.

Preventative services (early help, community support, early identification in universal settings) were inconsistent or under-resourced. There was a need for stronger public awareness and earlier routine screening to reduce likelihood of young children becoming victims.

- **Adult Focused Practice and Weak Use of the Child's Voice:** Assessments and service delivery were often adult-focused, particularly within probation and policing, where insufficient attention was paid to risks to children. The voice and lived experience of the child were frequently absent from police and probation documentation, undermining effective analysis and multi-agency planning. While health practitioners demonstrated some strong practice – especially with children who had special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – this was not applied consistently in records or safeguarding decisions.
- **Over-Reliance on Non-Abusing Parents:** Agencies often placed disproportionate responsibility on non-abusing parents to manage risk, without adequate recognition of coercive control or accountability for perpetrators. Safety planning was sometimes ineffective due to poor information sharing between agencies.
- **Work with Perpetrators is Underdeveloped:** Services rarely worked directly with perpetrators to address behaviour, meaning risk to children could remain unmitigated. A more systematic approach to perpetrator assessment and intervention was needed across agencies.
- **Information-Sharing Failures:** Inspectors identified systemic weaknesses in information-sharing, driven by fragmented IT systems and lack of practitioner confidence about legal thresholds for sharing data. This resulted in siloed working, inconsistent interventions, and missed opportunities to identify risks – particularly where perpetrators posed risks to children across multiple households or Local Authorities.

The use of Clare's Law was found to be inconsistent, with critical information not always shared with partner agencies, leaving professionals unaware of significant risks to children and adult victims.

The findings highlight a nationally inconsistent understanding of information-sharing responsibilities. Although updated statutory guidance allows sharing without parental consent when children are at risk, confidence remains low. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill sought to address this by introducing a duty to share safeguarding information, which inspectors strongly urge agencies to implement effectively.

## 5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

- 5.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 heralded a significant change in the law that led to children being recognised as victims in their own right if they saw, heard or were exposed to domestic abuse (defined as psychological, physical, sexual, financial and / or economic, emotional, and controlling and / or coercive behaviour, where the people involved were aged 16 or over and were or had been personally connected to each other (including relatives and intimate relationships)). Other relevant legislation / guidance outlined the expectations on organisations, both individually and in partnership with other agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 5.2. Extensive information exists on both the immediate impact and the enduring and chronic effects of domestic abuse on children, and this was reinforced by several of the contributors to this review. The Committee acknowledge the wide range of physical and mental ramifications across different phases of a child's development, factors which underline the severity of the issue and the way in which it causes those experiencing such abuse problems in the present, as well as likely challenges and obstacles for them in the future. Stronger public communication of this impact may play a part in making those over 16 consider the effects of their actions / potential actions when children are in the household.
- 5.3. Councils have a number of obligations around domestic abuse, including the provision of safe accommodation, working with organisations that represent the voice of victim-survivors, and leading on a domestic abuse partnership (involving the development and implementation of an associated strategy). The Local Authority also offers a range of early help support, with children's services undertaking required statutory interventions in relation to safeguarding / child protection and other associated planning which involves, in part, child protection investigations, home visits, observations of the child with parent(s), and referrals to support services. Whilst some of this work is conducted on a multi-agency partnership basis, from a housing perspective, the Committee note that SBC has limited direct working with social housing providers regarding domestic abuse considerations.
- 5.4. Commissioned by SBC as the local domestic abuse support service, Harbour highlighted that, whilst progress had been made, there was work to do around this scrutiny topic, specifically in terms of educating professionals and the public (especially schools). Of particular interest to the Committee was the use of Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) within health settings, roles which were reportedly much-valued and had made a significant difference in assisting staff with this challenging issue, as well as facilitating safe disclosure of abuse from victim-survivors and signposting them / enabling access to available support. Although future funding for hospital IDVAs is uncertain, it is clear that these arrangements should be maintained and indeed built upon where possible.
- 5.5. Given the focus on early years, the Committee sought, and was pleased to receive, assurance from several local organisations within the health sector around their role and actions in relation to this scrutiny topic – this included maternity, health visiting, and child mental health services. The Committee also welcomed the importance placed on domestic abuse by the overarching NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), as well as its involvement in local multi-agency partnerships, though heard that three of the four Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within the Borough were unaware of the local GP IDVA arrangement (this, however, appeared to contradict evidence provided by Harbour which highlighted the significant increase in referrals made from GP surgeries to the IDVA / Harbour since the introduction of the GP IDVA post), with all four requesting better promotion of the Harbour offer within practices. Cleveland Police was a key contributor to this review and highlighted its central role and responsibilities on this issue (including co-location within the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) to improve working relationships and the timeliness of responses). Mindful of the

forthcoming changes to the SBC 'front door' arrangements, it is vital that established relationships with partners are maintained to ensure robust safeguarding of children.

- 5.6. Two important partnerships provided evidence of work undertaken on this issue. The local Domestic Abuse Steering Group involves a range of partners and is responsible for delivering 'system' outcomes around domestic abuse – the current Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2028 and its associated actions being key to this endeavour. Backing-up Harbour's view that further work was required within schools, the Committee encourage a focus on increasing the uptake of domestic abuse training within primary schools (which in September 2025 had seen only 10% of these settings partake). Separately, the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) has responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and involves multiple statutory and non-statutory partners. Whilst the Committee expressed concern about the lack of an explicit HSSCP focus on domestic abuse in recent years, it received assurance that this topic was frequently considered as part of the partnership's work (e.g. a recent multi-agency audit on this theme).
- 5.7. The Committee heard that there were 5,225 recorded 'incidents' of domestic abuse across the Borough and 3,907 recorded domestic abuse 'crimes' during 2023-2024. For this same period, 1,010 contacts into SBC Children's Services had domestic abuse listed as the reason for contact, with 25% of referrals made to SBC Children's Services over this period being domestic abuse-related. The recently published Stockton-on-Tees Community Safety Strategy stated that *'Domestic abuse overall is showing a downward trend; however, incidents involving children present in the household are beginning to rise'*, a claim which was supported by data published within HSSCP annual reports. From an early years perspective, Cleveland Police statistics demonstrated that there were 763 cases recorded of children aged 0-5 being present during a domestic abuse incident in Stockton in 2025.
- 5.8. This review had a strong emphasis on seeking assurance around identifying and reporting cases where children had experienced domestic abuse, and all contributors provided details on how this was carried out and how staff were supported to recognise signs and act on them. Importantly, individual organisations not only reflected on their own work to raise awareness of this form of abuse and promote reporting routes, but also acknowledged collective efforts around this scrutiny topic through their involvement in multi-agency arrangements. However, whilst the Committee was often given assurance on the provision of training for staff, little data was submitted on training uptake and the extent to which this was being repeated / reinforced. Similarly, the Committee found that some organisations did not appear to record domestic abuse-related referrals that they had made, making it difficult to cross-reference this against the work coming into the Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub (CHUB) and local support service, Harbour, or establish trends within specific provision.
- 5.9. Again, mindful of this review's emphasis on the 0-5 age-range, the Borough's early years providers (e.g. nurseries / childminders) were asked to provide assurance on the identification and reporting of children who were, or were at risk of, being affected by domestic abuse within their household. Whilst the response rate to the Committee's survey was limited, those providers who did submit views demonstrated a good understanding of this issue, though also noted concerns regarding hidden abuse (particularly involving those who did not fit the stereotype of a family affected) and an absence of guidance / communications from the Council and / or other local organisations to assist in identifying / supporting children who had experienced domestic abuse. There was a clear call for an increased training offer for this sector.
- 5.10. Principally reflected through the ongoing work of Harbour, the Committee praised the involvement of local children and young people in the nationally significant *'Tell Nicole'* (the Domestic Abuse Commissioner) project which captured the voice of individuals affected by domestic abuse. As recognised in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, children are victims in their own right if they see or hear domestic abuse, and those charged with supporting them have a

duty to understand their experiences and seek their views in order to shape effective service provision.

- 5.11. There was broad positivity around the work of local partnerships when it came to the issue of domestic abuse, a feeling echoed by an annual assurance report from the Domestic Abuse Steering Group in September 2025 which, as stated by HSSCP, provided strong confidence regarding the effectiveness of arrangements, demonstrating that agencies from across the system were working to prevent, intervene early, and respond to domestic abuse. This review indicated sound buy-in and recognition of responsibility from all relevant local agencies, as well as an appreciation that working together was the best way to safeguard children.
- 5.12. Contributors were asked to identify areas for future focus in relation to this scrutiny topic, and a range of subsequent suggestions are included in the findings of this report – these should be considered by the local domestic abuse / safeguarding children partnerships. Additionally, the findings from six joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) carried out between October 2024 and June 2025 (looking at how local partnerships and services responded to children who were at risk of, or who had been victims of, domestic abuse) were published by the Government at the end of the Committee’s evidence-gathering phase – key messages from these also need to be disseminated to all relevant local agencies.
- 5.13. This was a complex topic to review about an issue that is multifaceted. Whilst it is not within the gift of the Committee to prevent this type of abuse occurring, the review has allowed a spotlight to be shone on how aware local services are of this issue, how they respond to any cases they identify, and how they work together to raise awareness and react to domestic abuse across the Borough. Addressing the causes of domestic abuse is a deep-rooted challenge for society in general, but it remains incumbent on organisations and their staff to be vigilant, appropriately trained, and suitably responsive to this all too prevalent issue.

## **Recommendations**

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) **The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) undertake a communications campaign (reflecting the ‘keeping your child in mind’ principle) around the impact of domestic abuse on children.**
- 2) **In collaboration with local schools, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) and Harbour introduce a school staff training programme on domestic abuse, its impact on children, and the support services available (including a plan to increase the uptake of domestic abuse training in primary schools).**
- 3) **Options be explored in order to secure funding for the continuation / enhancement of Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) services within local health settings (hospitals and primary care).**
- 4) **All organisations improve their recording of details (including a child’s age) of domestic abuse-related referrals made to the Stockton-on-Tees Children’s Hub (CHUB) (*note: to be known as the ‘Family Help Point’ from 1 April 2026*) and local support service, Harbour (even when domestic abuse is only one of several reasons for a referral being submitted).**

*(continued overleaf...)*

## **Recommendations (continued)**

The Committee recommend that:

- 5) **In terms of domestic abuse-related training:**
  - a) **SBC introduces a mandatory course for all staff (and Elected Members) which includes content on identifying this form of abuse and how / where to report it.**
  - b) **Relevant partnerships with oversight of domestic abuse / safeguarding matters encourage organisations represented within these multi-agency arrangements to introduce mandatory courses for all staff, the content of which should reflect a tiered approach based on individual roles / responsibilities.**
  - c) **The Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Steering Group (DASG) seek greater assurance around the uptake of such training within individual organisations (including early years providers) and how this is impacting upon practice.**
- 6) **Harbour strengthens the promotion of its existing offer within local primary care services (across all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and the individual practices themselves).**
- 7) **Where appropriate, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG oversee a drive to increase awareness and utilisation of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) by frontline professionals across the local 'system' when domestic abuse is identified within a household.**
- 8) **SBC provides assurance to key partners and all Elected Members around the changes to its 'front door' to services for children and their families (*note: to be known as the 'Family Help Point' from 1 April 2026*), including how existing partnership arrangements will be maintained / enhanced.**
- 9) **The Stockton-on-Tees DASG seek assurance that key local partners have 'voice of the child' strategies / mechanisms in place and that best practice principles in relation to capturing the child's voice are shared and continually reinforced (particularly with frontline officers attending households).**
- 10) **The Stockton-on-Tees DASG provide updates on the progress of actions associated with the local Domestic Abuse Strategy, highlighting any areas which are proving challenging and the reasons for this.**
- 11) **Suggested areas of future focus identified by contributors to this review be shared with, and subsequently considered by, the Stockton-on-Tees DASG and the HSSCP.**
- 12) **The findings and recommendations from the recently published thematic joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) report on '*the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse*' be shared with all relevant local organisations.**

Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
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1. How do you / staff within your service identify at-risk individuals / families?	
1	up to date on training, communicate with families, observing child's behaviour and wellbeing, observing parent and carer behaviour, listening to disclosures and dealing with them correctly.
2	through daily interactions and working with other professionals
3	"Staff are trained to notice signs and also working closely with families, building up relationships to ensure if there are any changes or signs we are more aware to these. Staff also work closely with external agencies so that we have an holistic approach with families and share information."
4	We look at all individuals, if we have any concerns we speak to the Hub, our area manager, and reach out for any support and address concerns.
5	"Background history of the family, additional information from other professional agencies. Noticeable changes, regular contact"
6	The behaviour of the child or family. And any sign of the child being at distress
7	Staff identify at-risk children and families through daily observation, ongoing relationships with children and parents/carers, and by monitoring changes in behaviour, attendance, emotional wellbeing, and development. We use safeguarding policies and information sharing with other professionals to build a picture of risk. Concerns raised by children, parents, or partner agencies are also acted upon promptly, following correct policies and procedures at all times.
8	Throughout the settling in process and by ensuring we build really close relationships so that parents reach out if at risk. We identify signs of abuse and have DSL and staff trained at Level 3 Safeguarding
9	"Observation of parents/ carers, children, their everyday conversations, mannerisms, play. Changes in their demeanour. Conversation"
10	Good parent partnership, offering an open door policy and drop in services monthly for SENCO advice and support and signposting services. Close monitoring of children's behaviour, appearance and wellbeing. Keeping staff up to date with training so they are able to spot signs of abuse. Monitoring play
11	All staff do safeguarding training.
12	"Strong partnership with parents/families. Clear and consistent communication. Always available and open to chat with parents and families, open and warming to chat and develop strong bonds. Extra vigilant at all times. I receive as much background information as possible through visits before starting at the setting, time away from my open hours to be able to talk with families and also identify any other services that may already be involved with the family."

# Appendix 1

(continued)

## Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
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13	"we pride ourselves on building up excellent relationships with our families, we make sure families are given time and our attention in a safe space. we hold regular meetings with our families. all staff a vigilant and know the signs to lookout for (through regular training) we look out for changes in appearance, behaviour and attitudes. we listen carefully to what children, families and other individuals have to say"
14	By observing families and by noticing changes in parents and child behaviour
15	We work closely with Social Care and family hubs and all have training on spotting the signs of at risk children and vulnerable individuals.
16	We look at the changes in the child to identify any sort of abuses at home - physical or emotional abuse

2. How confident are you / they about spotting signs of domestic abuse when working with young children?	
1	confident due to keeping up to date on training
2	I don't think this is something practitioners are particularly confident with. Although, they know the signs due to the area we are in I believe this is something that would be covered up as the families are all professionals and do not fit the stereotype of a family affected by abuse.
3	I feel that within the setting we are confident, staff are regularly questioned on the signs of domestic abuse and they are able to give good answering
4	We have regular training and courses that we attend, we discuss concerns and document anything concerning.
5	I think the more experienced staff would be confident, and happy to raise concerns. I think newer staff would be a little unsure.
6	Staff is confident- in spotting signs of domestic abuse
7	Staff have a moderate to good level of confidence in recognising potential indicators of domestic abuse, such as changes in behaviour, emotional distress, regression, unexplained injuries, or concerning play themes. However, staff recognise that domestic abuse can be hidden and complex, and confidence varies depending on experience and training.
8	Very confident, and we complete Operation Encompass training too.
9	We would like to think we are very confident, however we realise that people can hide what they don't want others to know

# Appendix 1

(continued)

## Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
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10	This is never a clear cut answer. I believe I am confident that my staff are up to date with training and know the generic signs and symptoms to look out for in behaviour of parents and children. Strong parent partnerships emphasise early identification too. However, I can not say for definite that cases wouldnt slip through the net .
11	-
12	Confident but I am also not naive in thinking it couldn't happen with my families, so I am always vigilant for signs, symptoms and indicators.
13	fairly confident
14	Quite confident
15	I feel like the majority of the team are really confident at spotting signs of domestic abuse and following procedures if needed. Some of the team are awaiting more training as they are new to the setting and are not as knowledgeable yet.
16	we are confident

### 3. Do you / staff within your service know how to report signs of domestic abuse?

All respondents answered 'yes'.

### 4. If your service has done this (reported signs of domestic abuse) in the past, how did you find the process?

8	We would like to be informed more explicitly to ensure we have the correct links
11	We haven't experienced this at our setting
13	all safeguarding concerns are passed onto to our designated safeguarding officers who will start the process, whilst we support the family. The process of reporting has been straight forward although it can be emotional for the families and the staff supporting them. I feel that our calm steady presence has helped the family be open to accepting help
14	In the past a prentice disclosed domestic abuse, I made a referral to the hub.
16	we have got in touch with the social care and the Childs health visitor

# Appendix 1

(continued)

## Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
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<b>5. Do you / staff within your service access domestic abuse training?</b>	
All respondents answered 'yes' (apart from 1 and 9 (both nurseries) who did not answer).	
<b>6. If not, why is this?</b>	
4	With our company
7	"We have all completed domestic abuse course on our own training platform - noodlenow. However would benefit from specific training/courses from the local authority."
9	Not specifically for domestic abuse. But abuse in general, mainly towards children
16	we do it on our learning portal
<b>7. Are you / staff within your service aware of local domestic abuse services?</b>	
All respondents answered 'yes' (apart from 3, 4 (both nurseries) and 11 (breakfast / after-school / holiday club) who answered 'no').	
<b>8. Have you had any experience of working with local domestic abuse services?</b>	
Respondents 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16 (all nurseries), 11 (breakfast / after-school / holiday club) and 12 (childminder) answered 'no'. Respondents 2, 5, 6, 7, 14 and 15 (all nurseries) answered 'yes'.	
<b>9. If so, which one/s, how did you work with them (e.g. referral, assessment, advice, etc.), and what was your view of the service/s?</b>	
2	Harbour
5	We've had families join our setting who've used the services of Harbour, we've not been involved in any referrals or assessments for it but helped support families and their children.
6	-

# Appendix 1

(continued)

## Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
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7	When speaking with a family who has been through this, they were recommended services such as harbour and cgl. The family hub offer lots of advice and support.
10	Harbour, supported assessments and attended TAF meetings (note: presume this provider meant to respond 'yes' to previous question)
13	although we do work closely with the families social workers
14	Referral, core group meetings .
15	I have worked with Harbour for some parents to make sure that they are getting the help they needed. They were referred in by social worker but I feel confident i could refer in if needed.

### 10. Do you receive any guidance / communications from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and / or other local organisations to assist you in identifying / supporting children who have experienced domestic abuse?

Respondents 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15 (all nurseries), and 12 (childminder) answered 'yes'.  
Respondents 2, 4, 10, 14, 16 (all nurseries), and 11 (breakfast / after-school / holiday club) answered 'no'.

### 11. What should be the key areas of future focus relating to this scrutiny topic? - Q11

1	-
2	Hidden abuse in professional working families and breaking the stereotype
3	Ensuring that information is fully shared between professionals
4	Training from the local authority if available and sharing of experiences, sharing ideas and how to address situations like this.
5	"More information and education around it. More awareness of long term affects on those involved"
6	Staff need more awareness over how they are going to handle difficult situations with children with domestic abuse

# Appendix 1

(continued)

## Early Years Providers Survey – Responses (November 2025 – February 2026)

Key:	Nursery (14)	Breakfast / After-School / Holiday Club (1)	Childminder (1)
7	"Increased specialist domestic abuse training, particularly focused on early years and young children. Greater awareness of local support pathways for families. Earlier intervention and prevention work with families"		
8	Training opportunities and support for families to reduce domestic abuse.		
9	Free training courses and in house sessions		
10	"I believe this is still a taboo subject and should be talked about more in all meetings across early years. A more refined step by step approach to reporting and supporting parents children and families"		
11	-		
12	-		
13	"breaking down barriers to disclosing and reporting domestic violence. more in-depth training. more safe spaces identified for families to disclose abuse and gain information"		
14	-		
15	"Adverse childhood experiences that may be caused through parents/families experiencing domestic abuse. What to do if we suspect abuse but no consent given from parents to refer them to services."		
16	Maybe we need a regular training for the staff		

### Within Stockton-on-Tees, there are:

- 95 childminders
- 60 school nurseries
- 47 nurseries and pre-schools
- 3 independent schools
- 3 out-of-school clubs

# Glossary of Terms

<b>ACE</b>	<b>Adverse Childhood Experience</b>
<b>CAMHS</b>	<b>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (TEWV)</b>
<b>CHUB</b>	<b>Children's Hub</b>
<b>CYP</b>	<b>Children and Young People</b>
<b>DAC</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Commissioner</b>
<b>DAHA</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance</b>
<b>DAPN</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Protection Notice</b>
<b>DAPO</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Protection Order</b>
<b>DASG</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse Steering Group</b>
<b>DASH</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence (risk tool)</b>
<b>EDT</b>	<b>Emergency Duty Team</b>
<b>EYCYP</b>	<b>Early Years Children and Young People</b>
<b>FFPP</b>	<b>Families First Partnership Programme</b>
<b>GP</b>	<b>General Practice / Practitioner</b>
<b>HDFT</b>	<b>Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust</b>
<b>HSSCP</b>	<b>Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership</b>
<b>ICB</b>	<b>Integrated Care Board</b>
<b>IDVA</b>	<b>Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (Harbour)</b>
<b>JTAI</b>	<b>Joint Targeted Area Inspection</b>
<b>KPI</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicator (HSSCP)</b>
<b>LSP</b>	<b>Lead Safeguarding Partner (HSSCP)</b>
<b>MARAC</b>	<b>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference</b>
<b>NENC ICB</b>	<b>NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board</b>

# Glossary of Terms

(continued)

<b>NHS</b>	<b>National Health Service</b>
<b>NTHFT</b>	<b>North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust</b>
<b>ONS</b>	<b>Office for National Statistics</b>
<b>OPCC</b>	<b>Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner</b>
<b>PCC</b>	<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>
<b>PCN</b>	<b>Primary Care Network</b>
<b>PMF</b>	<b>Performance Management Framework (HSSCP)</b>
<b>PPN</b>	<b>Public Protection Notice (Cleveland Police)</b>
<b>PTSD</b>	<b>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</b>
<b>PVP</b>	<b>Protecting Vulnerable People (Cleveland Police)</b>
<b>SAAF</b>	<b>Safeguarding Accountability &amp; Assurance Framework (NHS England)</b>
<b>SBC</b>	<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council</b>
<b>SSP</b>	<b>Safer Stockton Partnership</b>
<b>TEWV</b>	<b>Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust</b>
<b>TSAB</b>	<b>Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board</b>
<b>TVHF</b>	<b>Tees Valley Home Finder</b>
<b>VAWG</b>	<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b>

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## REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport –  
Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

# Minutes of Various Bodies

## Summary

The attached minutes are for consideration by Cabinet.

## Reasons for Recommendation

To enable Cabinet to view the minutes of various bodies.

## Recommendations

That the minutes of the meetings detailed in the appendices be received.

## Detail

1. 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:-

TSAB – 10 December 2025

TVCA Cabinet – 20 March 2026

## Consultation and engagement

Not applicable.

## Next Steps

None.

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney

Post Title: Head of Democratic Services

Telephone number: 01642 526312

Email address: jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk

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## Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

Time: **9.30am – 12pm**

Venue: **Microsoft Teams**

### Minutes

#### Attendees

Name	Job Role	Role	Representing
Jane Bell	Business Support Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Lee Brown	Area Manager	Member	Cleveland Fire Brigade
Anne Coxon	Temporary Project Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Helen Dent	Project Development Officer	Member	Healthwatch South Tees
Elaine Godwin	Business Support Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Louise Grabham	Director of Adult Social Care	Member	Middlesbrough Council
Adrian Green	Independent Chair	Member	Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
Jonathan Hagan (Part)	Chief Inspector	Invited	Cleveland Police
Jill Harrison	Director of Adult and Community Based Services	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Neil Harrison	Head of Safeguarding & Specialist Services	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Rachelle Kipling	Head of Policy, Partnerships & Delivery	Member	Office of Police & Crime Commissioner
Alyson Longstaff	Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader	Member	Durham Tees Valley Department for Work and Pensions
Amy Mahoney	Business Manager	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Caroline McGlade	Chief Superintendent	Deputy	Cleveland Police
Jen Moore	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults	Member	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Carolyn Nice	Director of Adults and Health	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Cara Nimmo	Assistant Director for Adult Care Operations	Deputy	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Kay Nicolson	CEO	Member	A Way Out
Ann Powell	Head of Stockton & Hartlepool PDU	Member	National Probation Service
Angela Storm	Data Analysis and Performance Monitoring Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit
Chloe Swash	Business Support Officer	Member	TSAB Business Unit

#### Apologies

Name	Job Role	Role	Representing
Cllr Pauline Beall	Lead Member	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Sarah Bowman-Abouna	Director of Public Health	Member	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Angela Connor	Assistant Director Adult Social Care/PSW	Deputy	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Elsbeth Devanney	Group Director of Nursing & Quality	Member	TEWW
Natasha Douglas	Healthwatch Manager	Member	Healthwatch Stockton
Wayne Fox	Temporary Assistant Chief Constable	Member	Cleveland Police

John Lovatt	Assistant Director	Deputy	Hartlepool Borough Council
Peter Neal *	CEO	Member	Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
Lucy Owens **	Chief Executive	Member	Catalyst Stockton
Julian Penton **	Development Officer	Member	Hartlepool Community Trust
Vicky Playforth	Interim Director of Nursing	Member	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
John Rafferty	Compliance Business Partner - Safeguarding	Member	Thirteen Group
Patrick Rice	Corporate Director of Adults and Communities	Member	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Stephen Thomas	Development Officer	Member	Healthwatch Hartlepool
Kellie Woodley	North East Director	Member	People First

<b>Absent (Invited)</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Role</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Cllr Gary Allen	Lead Member	Member	Hartlepool Borough Council
Lindsay Britton-Robertson	Assistant Director of Safeguarding	Member	University Hospitals Tees
Mark Davis *	Chief Executive	Member	Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Iain Richardson	Head of Safer Prisons & Equality	Member	HMP Holme House Prison
Cllr Lisa Robson	Lead Member	Member	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Cllr Jan Ryles	Lead Member	Member	Middlesbrough Council
Linda Sergeant	Project Lead	Member	Healthwatch South Tees
Nicki Smith	Associate Director for Nursing (Safeguarding)	Member	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Leanne Stockton	Business Manager	Member	Hartlepool & Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership
Gary Watson	Business Manager	Member	South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership

\* Attends on behalf of MVDA & RCVA,

\*\* Attendance will be shared between Catalyst and Hartlepool Community Trust

<b>Referenced Organisations</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Ashleigh Parsons	Inspector	CQC (Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees and Redcar & Cleveland) ***
Rachel Lucas		North East Ambulance Service

\*\*\* CQC Attend the Regional Safeguarding Adults Board Chairs Network Meetings.

**Copies:** Margaret Blakey, Tami Egonu, Caroline Galilee, Jayne Hardwick, Rebecca Nary, Abbie Smith, Executive Mailbox Cleveland Police, NENCICB Safeguarding.

<b>Agenda Item 1</b>	<b>Introductions and Apologies</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Chair
Adrian Green (AG) welcomed members to the December meeting and apologies were noted. AG reminded members that the purpose of the Board is to support people with care and support needs from the risks of abuse and neglect and to be probing and curious whilst remaining constructive and respectful.		

<b>Agenda Item 2</b>	<b>Minutes from the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Chair
The actions from the last meeting were reviewed and updates provided:		

*Raising appropriate Safeguarding Concerns is to be highlighted with the Tees Valley Infrastructure Partnership to help share the message about this – Lucy Owens*

Lucy Owens was unable to attend the meeting, so no update was available.

*Raising appropriate Concerns is to be highlighted with the Healthwatch Board to see how they can support sharing the message with care providers – Helen Dent*

Helen Dent (HD) provided an update around some insight work that Healthwatch have done with DePaul Nightstop and Last Hope in Redcar. Key themes emerging from the work are around the housing crisis, gaps in emergency community hosting and a lack of hosts for Nightstop, which is forcing people to travel to other areas to seek assistance. The Mental Health crisis was also flagged due to the number of individuals arriving in crisis with no immediate support. County Durham do currently have a Healthsquad model that supports individuals just below the crisis point. Many individuals are not registered with GPs and struggle to access basic care, leading to the suggestion for more health checks in trusted community spaces rather than GP surgeries or hospital settings. From the discussions Healthwatch are keen to identify opportunities to bring services into trusted spaces and to have commissioner engagement with lived experience. One individual working in DePaul with lived experience has agreed to be part of a lived experience group going forward. HD queried what Healthwatch can do now to assist going forward.

Louise Grabham requested that HD provide the same presentation to the Rough Sleeping Working Group. Community Mapping formed part of discussion at the last meeting to understand what is being delivered across the community and where the gaps lie. The group have agreed to form a lived experience panel so there may be benefit in linking in with the work that Healthwatch are doing. An invitation will be forwarded to HD to attend the next meeting.

Kay Nicholson (KN) advised that there are a number of VCS organisations that are doing aspects of this already, such as the sexual health checks that My Sisters Place provide. A mapping exercise would be a good opportunity to better understand this and KN noted that Infrastructure organisations may be a useful starting point for this work. The Rough Sleeping questionnaire that has been published by the government picks up on some of these elements and will help to inform the work. A link was shared with members during the meeting.

Cara Nimmo has met with a number of VCS organisations in Redcar to understand what they can offer and to avoid duplication. In January, a Safe Haven is starting in Redcar around prevention of mental health crises. Initially this will be limited to referrals from Statutory Partners but it is hoped that this will be expanded as the service grows. The work is being funded by ICB and is being hosted by Teesside Mind. The service will be available from 4.30pm to 10pm 7 days a week. Cara Nimmo will link with Teesside Mind to see what information can be shared.

*AG to liaise with the Business Unit regarding assurance in relation to the widening in the gap between a Safeguarding Concern and a Section 42 Enquiry – Adrian Green / Business Unit*

This item has been added to the agendas for discussion at the Operational Leads and TSAB Development Sessions and AG has met with the Business Unit to discuss how this can be further explored across TSAB. AG added that this has been raised during recent Scrutiny Meetings so the Board need to assure themselves that they are happy with the decision-making models being used and that there are no hidden risks.

*Sharing of information regarding offensive weapons to be added to the agenda for discussion at the Operational Leads Sub-Group – Business Unit*

The item was discussed at the last Operational Leads Sub-Group to better understand how agencies make staff aware and how information is shared. Despite processes being in place, the group concluded that there was more work to do in this area.

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

<b>Action Points</b>	<b>Action Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1. Invitation to the Rough Sleeping Working Group to be	JB	30/01/2026

forwarded to Helen Dent		
2. Information on Redcar Safe Haven to be shared	Cara Nimmo	30/01/2026

<b>Agenda Item 3</b>	<b>Missing From Home Update</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Jonathan Hagan
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Jonathan Hagan, Chief Inspector within the Prevention Command, attended the meeting to provide an update on Missing From Home.

The Missing Persons Unit was created in 2024. Prior to the unit being created there was significant demand arising from missing persons within Cleveland, which were primarily picked up and led by response teams from start to finish. Within this process gaps were identified around prevention, problem solving and identifying and managing risk. The Missing Persons Unit which was set up and piloted in Stockton comprises of 2 teams – The persons investigation unit which consists of a Sergeant and 8 officers who would actively investigate to locate missing people. The other part of the unit is the Prevention Team of a Sergeant and 4 staff who are identifying trends, problem solving, creating trigger plans and working with partner agencies to reduce missing episodes and to find long term solutions and identify risks.

Key outcomes for the Unit were to reduce missing episodes, reduce the length of time someone was missing, proactively utilise Child Abduction Warning Notices and work with partner organisations to better understand this legislation, to develop and embed a problem solving culture around missing and to better understand risks.

A robust structure around governance has been put in place, which includes an audit process to identify risks and themes. Learning from this is disseminated around the force to aid improvement. Work is being done to look at repeat missing cases to identify the reasons for these and to look at themes for first time missing persons. The workforce is encouraged to be professionally curious to understand the reason why an individual has gone missing and to identify triggers. The focus is on problem solving and prevention and Cleveland Police are working with partners to seek some longer term solutions.

Since the implementation of the Unit there has been a decrease in the number of cases and also the length of time it takes to locate a missing person. Frontline staff have been surveyed and have been supportive of the process. Positive feedback has also been received from colleagues in wider organisations and members of the public.

Caroline McGlade (CM) highlighted that the percentage of missing adults across the area does show an increase, but the percentage figure is affected by the significant reduction in the number of missing children. The actual number for adults has reduced, although CM acknowledged that there is still work to do to understand first time missing adults and around the increase in high risk missing adults.

The force has introduced the Forcer Protocol. This is a national initiative aimed at assisting the police to locate ex-service persons who may be missing and works in a similar way to the Herbert Protocol.

AG enquired if analysis could be shared in relation to missing adults and their identified care and support needs or health needs. The results can then be shared with partners to see where they may be able to support going forward.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Analysis of identified care and support needs relating to missing persons to be shared with the Business Unit	JH / CM	30/01/2026

<b>Agenda Item 4</b>	<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council – CQC Inspection Report</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Carolyn Nice
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Carolyn Nice (CN) provided members with a summary of the outcome of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) CQC inspection.

SBC received an overall rating of Good. A number of areas within safeguarding were highlighted for focus:

Conversion rates – Greg Purta is conducting a piece of work alongside TSAB to do a deep dive to look at decision making, inappropriate referrals and the front door process. There needs to be a better understanding of thresholds and contact options for partners if they have concerns that do not meet the criteria for safeguarding. Once this work is complete an update will be provided to Board.

Transitions – This had already been acknowledged as an area of challenge and SBC were open with inspectors regarding this. A new Transitions Team was formed in October and is currently in the process of networking and engaging with partners so that they can work effectively with Children and Adults. The team comprises of 3 members who have both Childrens and Adults experience. They will work on transition assessments and will engage with individuals from the age of 14, working alongside Children’s staff to support them through the transition process.

CN thanked everyone that had helped to support SBC’s inspection process.

AG noted that the inspections that took place across Tees were early in the process, and that more recent inspections have taken a very different format. As a result, it is hard to form a baseline for comparison as not all LA’s have had the same experience. All four of the Tees LAs have now received their reports and updates on actions will be provided to Board throughout the year.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Update on work around conversion rates to be provided.	GP/CN	11/03/2026

<b>Agenda Item 5</b>	<b>Probation – Update on Operational Changes</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Ann Powell
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**This section of the minutes has been removed due to its confidential nature.**

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Update on Probation to be provided in the Spring / Summer 2026	AP	10/06/2026

<b>Agenda Item 6</b>	<b>HRAP Update</b>	<b>Presenter:</b> Neil Harrison
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A copy of the High Risk Adults Panel (HRAP) Report for Q2 covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 was circulated with the agenda. Neil Harrison provided a summary of the key points.

The number of cases in HRAP remain high, particularly in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. The key themes across Tees are Housing and Homelessness and Substance misuse, which appeared in the top five for all four of the LAs. The third most common theme was Self-neglect and physical risk, highlighted by three LAs and often linked to deteriorating health and engagement difficulties. Mental health concerns and domestic abuse were also significant, appearing in two LA lists, indicating an increasing overlap between housing instability, trauma, and safeguarding risks. This pattern underscores the need for integrated, trauma-informed approaches and cross-agency collaboration to address these interconnected vulnerabilities.

Areas of good practice were identified around HRAP with partners demonstrating strong commitment to trauma-informed and person-centred approaches. LAs focused on reducing barriers to engagement by tailoring appointment times, venues, and travel arrangements, and by creating psychologically safe environments. Practical challenges such as transport, digital access, and language were actively addressed, alongside workforce development initiatives, including restorative justice training. Multi-agency collaboration was evident in complex cases, while multidisciplinary teams worked to balance physical health needs with mental wellbeing, highlighting a proactive, integrated approach to safeguarding.

Challenges were noted around the lack of suitable accommodation, especially for individuals with complex needs and out of area LAs relocating vulnerable families into unsuitable areas. Engagement difficulties, with some services withdrawing due to non-engagement, heightening risk for those with trauma histories. Middlesbrough highlighted gaps in the MARAC/HRAP interface and victim support, while Redcar reported challenges in multi-agency working when individuals are temporarily housed outside the borough.

A number of case studies demonstrating successful outcomes were included within the report.

AG requested that the next HRAP update to Board includes details of why the case was referred to HRAP, what had been done prior to this point, and why had this failed.

Cara Nimmo noted that the figures for Redcar were significantly lower and queried if all LAs were adopting the same approach in relation to HRAP.

Angela Storm (AS) provided an update on the data in relation to HRAP. This has been discussed by the Performance, Audit and Quality Sub-Group (PAQ) as the figure for Middlesbrough has doubled during the Q2 period. A multi-agency audit is scheduled to take place in January 2026, which will consider 2 randomly selected cases from each LA, to seek assurance that the process is being applied consistently. It was noted that a high number of referrals within Hartlepool and Middlesbrough were made by social workers. It is hoped that the audits will also help to identify why these cases resulted in referrals to HRAP and what had failed to work prior to this. AS noted that the figures for Redcar are low as HRAP referrals that are declined are not included within their figures.

CN noted that the themes are very similar across all of the LA areas and queried what is being done by partnerships outside of the process to try and resolve the issues before they reach this point.

Jen Moore (JM) advised that the organisational changes taking place within the ICB will have a significant impact on staffing, which may mean that attendance at HRAP is no longer possible, and that an alternative approach may be needed. Members queried if attendance from ICB as the commissioning body was needed, and that this should come from the front-line Primary Care involved in the case. It was highlighted that Primary Care have the same level of legal responsibility as the other organisations involved, and that non-attendance can have a serious impact on intervention. AG highlighted that HRAP is a TSAB process that partners have committed to, so all need to support. JM will look at ways to ensure that Primary Care is represented appropriately.

Action Points	Action Owner	Deadline
1. Ensure that Primary Care is appropriately represented at HRAP	JM	Ongoing
2. Next HRAP summary to include details of why the case was referred and what had been done prior to this	BU	11/03/2026

<b>Agenda Item 7</b>	<b>TSAB Data Dashboard – Q2, 2025/26 Update</b>	<b>Presenter: Angela Storm</b>
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The link to access the data dashboard was shared with the agenda. AS highlighted the key points:

**Performance Indicators** – The layout of this section has been amended to include the figures for the previous quarter to allow for comparison. PI1 around Repeat Section 42 Enquiries is currently not being achieved in three of the LA areas. This has been discussed at the PAQ and Operational Leads Sub-Groups, and best practice from SBC who are achieving this PI has been shared. Hartlepool Borough Council do have an ongoing issue with one care provider and out of area placements, which is impacting on their figure. Middlesbrough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) have been tasked to look at this PI in more detail to check recording mechanisms. PI2 is just short of being achieved and AS reminded members that this target was increased to 95%. From the Multi-Agency Audits, it is evident that people are being asked about their desired outcomes from the Safeguarding process, therefore the issue may be as a result of the recording of this. Good progress has been made on the other PIs, with the majority of individuals satisfied with their outcomes, which indicates that the question is being asked. A significant amount of work has been done in relation to the ‘Risk Remains’ category, and this figure is now a more accurate reflection.

AG highlighted the need to resolve any issues to ensure that PIs are met, as failure to achieve these could be noted at future scrutiny meetings.

**Concerns** – The figure has increased slightly from the previous year, although the growth rate is slowing. Physical, Neglect & Acts of Omission and Self-Neglect were the top 3 categories of abuse. The

main locations of risk were Own Home, followed by Care Homes (Residential & Nursing). The majority of Concerns were received from Care Homes, and whilst the 'Other' category still features, the figure is now significantly lower due to the work that has been done around this.

**Section 42 Enquiries** – The conversion rate is continuing to decrease and is now at 22%. Work needs to be done to ensure that only legitimate Concerns are being submitted, and this area will be further discussed at the Operational Leads and TSAB Development sessions taking place in February. The main categories of abuse that progressed to a Section 42 Enquiry were Neglect & Acts of Omission, Self-Neglect and Financial/Material. The numbers relating to Physical Abuse are lower at this point. When the category is broken down to look at the sub-categories, it is noted that a high number of resident-on-resident Concerns are not progressing to an Enquiry. Own home remains the main location of risk and Known to the Individual was the main source of risk during the quarter.

In response to a query, AS confirmed that figures for Sexual Abuse are recorded under a sub-category, but it does not feature within the top 5 on the data dashboard.

AG confirmed that the increasing gap between a Safeguarding Concern and a Section 42 Enquiry will be explored further, as this will be a key item in the upcoming development sessions. AG thanked members for the initial discussions today, noting that it was a good starting point and valid items to include in these upcoming sessions.

<b>Agenda Item 8</b>	<b>Sub-Group and Task &amp; Finish Group Update</b>	
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**Operational Leads – Amy Mahoney**

The group last met on 20<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting had a full agenda, covering many of the items discussed during today's meeting.

RCBC presented their Multi Agency Audit Report which led to a themed data discussion.

The Regional ADASS safeguarding leads group is currently undertaking a piece of work to look at the high number of Concerns received from Police in Northumbria. Guidance was circulated as part of this and has been shared with Cleveland Police.

Resident on Resident resources are being reviewed which prompted discussion in relation to the data and how low-level concerns can be shared and recorded.

As an action from the last Board meeting good practice around repeat S42 Enquiries was shared. It was noted that cases are becoming more complex and often require extended periods of monitoring. A deeper analysis will be conducted via the PAQ Sub-Group.

Information sharing on weapon related risks and the systems that LAs and colleagues have in place was discussed.

Staff forum feedback and links to the North East Sex Worker forum were discussed.

Learning from the NB Case was discussed. This included actions around internal case handovers which was identified as a unique learning point.

Responding to and Addressing Serious Concerns reports and associated learning were shared.

The Medication Guidance for Commissioners has been updated to strengthen the position around training and medication practice issues. A copy was circulated to members with the agenda and changes were highlighted. The document was approved by members.

A copy of the RCBC Multi Agency Audit Report was circulated with the agenda. Cara Nimmo summarised the key points from the report. The audit found that the quality of the initial referrals was poor and contained conflicting information. Work has been done to provide feedback to the organisations involved. The group agreed with the decision that both cases didn't need to progress to a S42 Enquiry but found that in both instances the amount of work done to reach this decision did mirror the work that would be undertaken at the S42 Enquiry stage. There was some conflicting information regarding the voice of the adult; with the adult deemed to have capacity but then the referrer acting in their best interest at the MSP stage. Areas of good practice were identified around professional curiosity which was well evidenced. Recommendations were made in relation to the amount of work that took place prior to the decision not to progress and that systems do not support this appropriately. Consideration should also be given to language used in recording to avoid ambiguity, the length of time

taken for the decision to be made for one of the cases without any rationale to explain this and use of the Decision Support Guidance not being evidenced.

### **Performance, Audit & Quality – Jen Moore**

The group met on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Jen Moore and AS have met with each of the LAs to look at their systems, which has been helpful in putting the data into context.

Discussion took place around complex cases, and in the absence of the SAC return, it was anticipated that the increase in referrals would be a national trend.

The frequency of the QAF was discussed and a further meeting is taking place in January.

Submissions from the Police and NEAS were reviewed and it was acknowledged that there is more work to do on the quality of Concerns received. Caroline McGlade offered any assistance needed with this piece of work.

### **Rough Sleeping Working Group – Louise Grabham**

The working group met on 9<sup>th</sup> December.

The LAs provided updates on their structures and arrangements around rough sleeping and updates will be provided by wider partners at the next meeting.

A discussion took place around the data dashboard leading to some key lines of enquiry including a community mapping exercise to identify support across Tees and any gaps.

Prison release and lack of support in this area was flagged as a key risk so this has been added as an agenda item for the next meeting to look at the Probation process.

The group agreed to establish a lived experience group to hear the voice of individuals.

A key risk was identified around finance and the Local Government Settlement. Some LAs may have to focus on their statutory duty of wider support which may impact on the allocation for rough sleeping.

The next meeting will focus on the progress around the Target Priority Groups, and any key barriers linked to this.

AG noted that the group are making good progress.

### **Safeguarding Adults Review – Jill Harrison**

The group have met twice and have considered 2 new notifications. In both cases the criteria for a SAR were not met. In one of the cases a number of other reviews are underway so it was agreed that once these are completed a desk top review of the findings will be done to capture any multi-agency learning for Tees.

An update was provided on a Middlesbrough case which did not meet the criteria for a SAR, however single agency learning was discussed.

Action Plans for the Out of Areas SARs conducted by Sunderland have been received and will be reviewed in January 2026.

A thematic SAR analysis report commissioned by Gateshead SAB following serious concerns about care standards at a residential home was considered. The learning and recommendations were reviewed from a Tees perspective to identify relevant learning.

A further case was considered at the December meeting and a recommendation has been made to the Independent Chair.

It was noted that there have been a number of referrals linked to the Drug and Alcohol Related Death Review process, so work needs to be done to ensure good links with the panel to avoid duplication.

The Evie SAR Action Plan has been developed and was shared with the agenda for approval. Members approved the action plan.

Linked to a previous SAR (SF), TSAB hosted an online 'Mental Capacity Learning Workshop' facilitated by Neil Allen of LPS Law. The workshop was specifically designed for Senior managers, Operational managers, Principal Social Workers, and Legal teams across the partnership. The workshop covered an in-depth exploration of key complex areas relevant to safeguarding practice and legal frameworks, including: The Mental Capacity Act, Executive Functioning, the role of the Court of Protection and insights from local and national SARs including the SF case. A comprehensive resource pack was shared during and after the session to allow all delegates to cascade the learning within their own organisations and feedback both locally and nationally has been extremely positive.

AG added that this was a different approach to taking forward a recommendation from a SAR and appears to have been successful and good value for money. AG extended thanks to those involved in organising the event.

<b>Agenda Item 9</b>	<b>TSAB Development Day – 11th February 2026</b>	<b>Presenter: Chair</b>
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AG reminded members that the TSAB Development Session is taking place on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February and encouraged member attendance where possible. The Operational Leads Session will take place the week before and will feed into the TSAB session.

<b>Agenda Item 10</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	<b>Presenter: Chair</b>
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No further items were raised for discussion.

AG thanked members for their support this year and wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

Next Meeting Date: **TSAB Development Session  
Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026**  
Time: **9.30am – 1pm**  
Venue: **River Tees Watersports Centre**

Minutes approved by Independent Chair:



Date: 12th Jan 2025

**Appendix 1 - Attendance Matrix**

The table below reflects named members of the TSAB, although deputies have been shaded.

<b>Company</b>	<b>09/04/2025</b>	<b>11/06/2025</b>	<b>10/09/2025</b>	<b>08/10/2025</b>	<b>10/12/2025</b>	<b>11/02/2026</b>	<b>11/03/2026</b>	<b>5</b>
A Way Out	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	60%
Catalyst Stockton / Hartlepool Community Trust	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	60%
ICB	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	100%
Cleveland Fire Brigade	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	100%
Cleveland Police	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	100%
DWP	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	60%
Hartlepool and Stockton Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Hartlepool Borough Council	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	100%
HBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Healthwatch Hartlepool	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	40%
Healthwatch South Tees	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	60%
Healthwatch Stockton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
HMP Holme House Prison	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	40%
Middlesbrough Borough Council	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	100%
MBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Middlesbrough VDA / Redcar & Cleveland VDA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
National Probation Service Cleveland	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	40%
People First	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	40%
Public Health	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	40%
of Police & Crime Commissioner *	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	100%
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	100%
RCBC Lead Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Stockton on Tees Borough Council	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	100%
SBC Lead Member	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	80%
South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Teesside University	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20%
Tees Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	80%
Thirteen Housing	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	60%
TSAB Independent Chair	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	100%
TSAB Business Unit	5	6	6	6	6	0	0	100%
University Hospitals Tees	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	40%

\* (committed to 2 meetings per year)



TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET

Friday, 20 March 2026 at 10.00am

Teesside Airport Business Suite, Teesside International Airport, Darlington

These Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next Cabinet meeting and are therefore subject to amendments.

<b>ATTENDEES</b>	
<b>Members</b>	
Mayor Ben Houchen (Chair)	Tees Valley Mayor
Councillor Stephen Harker	Leader, Darlington Borough Council
Councillor Pamela Hargreaves	Leader, Hartlepool Borough Council
Mayor Chris Cooke	Leader, Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor Lisa Evans	Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Matthew Ord	Chair of the Business Board
<b>Officers</b>	
Tom Bryant	Chief Executive, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Brackenborough	Director of Operations, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jo Moore	Interim Director of Finance & Resources, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Craig Peacock	Director of Inward Investment & Marketing, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jonathan Spruce	Director of Infrastructure, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Sarah Walker	Director of Business Solutions, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Jeanette McGarry	Interim Monitoring Officer, Tees Valley Combined Authority
Dave Winstanley	Executive Director , Darlington Borough Council,
Denise McGuckin	Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council
Erik Scollay	Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Council

Brian Archer	Chief Executive, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Mike Greene	Chief Executive, Stockton Borough Council
Alan Weston	Head of Transport & Infrastructure, TVCA
Elaine Fryett	Interim Head of Investment Development, TVCA
Sally Henry	Governance Officer, TVCA
<b>Also in attendance</b>	
Sir Steve Bullock DL	Independent Advisory Board

*These Minutes capture the key points and decisions of the meeting, but they do not attempt to reproduce every word spoken. The full recording can be found [here](#).*

	<p><b><u>CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS</u></b></p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.</p>
TVCA 75/25	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
TVCA 76/25	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>Councillor Hargreaves declared a pecuniary interest in agenda items 5 and item 9 and left the Cabinet room for the entirety of both these items.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke declared a non pecuniary interest in item 5 &amp; 9.</p>
TVCA 77/25	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record.</p>
TVCA 78/25	<p><b>TEES VALLEY MAYOR'S UPDATE</b></p> <p>The Mayor advised Cabinet members that he had nothing further to update them on which was not covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>

	<p>Members were however given an opportunity ask questions.</p> <p>No questions were asked.</p>
<p>TVCA 79/25</p>	<p><b>MAYOR UPDATE ON THE MIDDLESBROUGH &amp; HARTLEPOOL MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS</b></p> <p>Councillor Hargreaves left the room at this time.</p> <p>Cabinet received a report which provided an update on the current status on the two town centre Development Corporations.</p> <p>Cabinet were advised that the Mayor intends to review the requirement for the MDC and HDC. They were advised that the Middlesbrough Development Corporation budget would be transferred to Hartlepool Development Corporation if it was maintained and Middlesbrough Development Corporation was decided to be disbanded.</p> <p>They were further advised that a DC being disbanded would need to come up with a plan for disposal of the assets and that this will be done in discussion with Middlesbrough Council and/or Hartlepool Council, and that the plan would be reported back to Cabinet. It would be a Cabinet decision on whether any assets are transferred to TVCA.</p> <p>Cabinet were invited to:-</p> <p>A. <b>NOTE</b> the update that the Mayor is conducting a review of Middlesbrough Development Corporation and Hartlepool Development Corporation, specifically an analysis on whether to disband one or either of the Development Corporations and the benefits of different arrangements for regeneration of Hartlepool and Middlesbrough Town Centre compared to the benefits of maintaining the DCs; If a decision was taken to disband one or either of the DCs in question it would include planning powers returning to the constituent authority in question during the close down period and beyond; and that if one of the DCs was to be kept and the other disbanded, the residual finance allocated would be transferred to the retained DC. For example, if MDC was to be disbanded but HDC was maintained, residual funding in the Middlesbrough Development Corporation budget would be</p>

transferred to Hartlepool Development Corporation. This funding is part of the £20m approved by Cabinet on 22 July 2022 to support Middlesbrough and Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporations, and can be transferred under delegated authority.

- B. **NOTE** that HDC or MDC, if they were to be disbanded, would need to publish a plan for disposal of the assets currently held by the relevant DC, that this will be done in discussion with Middlesbrough Council and/or Hartlepool Council, and that the plan would be reported back to Cabinet. It would be a TVCA Cabinet decision on whether any assets are transferred to TVCA.

The Chair advised members that now is an appropriate time to conduct a review of the Middlesbrough and Hartlepool Development Corporations.

Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no comments or questions.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet:-

**A. NOTED** the update that the Mayor is conducting a review of Middlesbrough Development Corporation and Hartlepool Development Corporation, specifically an analysis on whether to disband one or either of the Development Corporations and the benefits of different arrangements for regeneration of Hartlepool and Middlesbrough Town Centre compared to the benefits of maintaining the DCs; If a decision was taken to disband one or either of the DCs in question it would include planning powers returning to the constituent authority in question during the close down period and beyond; and that if one of the DCs was to be kept and the other disbanded, the residual finance allocated would be transferred to the retained DC. For example, if MDC was to be disbanded but HDC was maintained, residual funding in the Middlesbrough Development Corporation budget would be transferred to Hartlepool Development Corporation. This funding is part of the £20m approved by Cabinet on 22 July 2022 to support Middlesbrough and Hartlepool Mayoral Development Corporations, and can be transferred under delegated authority.

**B. NOTED** that HDC or MDC, if they were to be disbanded, would need to publish a plan for disposal of the assets currently held by the relevant DC, that this will be done in discussion with

	<p>Middlesbrough Council and/or Hartlepool Council, and that the plan would be reported back to Cabinet. It would be a TVCA Cabinet decision on whether any assets are transferred to TVCA.</p>
<p>TVCA 80/25</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC CODE OF CONDUCT</b></p> <p>Cabinet approved in principle the Public Code of Conduct on 12 December 2025, as part of the Constitution report, subject to review by the Audit &amp; Governance Committee, with a report back to Cabinet to confirm any feedback.</p> <p>Cabinet were asked to consider the comments of the Audit &amp; Governance Committee.</p> <p>Cabinet were invited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>NOTE</b> that the Audit and Governance Committee met on the 20 February 2026 and were supportive of the Cabinet decision on the 12 December 2025 to approve the Public Code of Conduct in principle, and did not propose any amendments.</li> <li>B. <b>NOTE</b> that the Public Code of Conduct, included at <b>Appendix A</b> to the report will now be included in the Constitution and implemented.</li> </ul> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. No comments or questions were raised.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that Cabinet:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>NOTED</b> that the Audit and Governance Committee met on the 20 February 2026 and were supportive of the Cabinet decision on the 12 December 2025 to approve the Public Code of Conduct in principle, and did not propose any amendments.</li> <li>B. <b>NOTED</b> that the Public Code of Conduct, included at <b>Appendix A</b> to the report will now be included in the Constitution and implemented.</li> </ul>
<p>TVCA 81/25</p>	<p><b>ORGANISATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS</b></p> <p>Cabinet received a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress relating to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Organisational</p>

	<p>Improvement Plan and other matters relating to the Best Value Notice, issued on 3 April 2025, and the External Audit Statutory Recommendations Letter, issued on 15 April 2025. The report also outlined the presentational changes made to the organisational improvement action plan.</p> <p>Cabinet were invited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>Note and provide feedback on:</b> presentational changes to Organisational Improvement Action Plan</li> <li>B. <b>Note</b> Progress on the Organisational Improvement Plan.</li> </ul> <p>The Chief Executive advised that he has provided a self-reflection document to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The document has also been shared with Cabinet members.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke commented on the timescales included in the Improvement Plan and that Cabinet should have a view on any proposed amendments. This was agreed.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>Noted and provide feedback on:</b> presentational changes to Organisational Improvement Action Plan</li> <li>B. <b>Noted</b> Progress on the Organisational Improvement Plan.</li> </ul>
<p>TVCA 81/25</p>	<p><b>INDEPENDENT ADVISORY BOARD REPORT</b></p> <p>Cabinet were provided with a progress update report from the Chair of the Independent Advisory Board .</p> <p>Sir Steve Bullock, member of the Independent Advisory Board, attended Cabinet to present the report.</p> <p>He advised that the Independent Advisory Board’s (IAB) role is to oversee the progress made against the Improvement Plan. It seeks to offer challenge and support.</p>

	<p>In the months the IAB has been working, they have met with officers at TVCA, Local Authorities and Cabinet members.</p> <p>The authors of the Best Value Notice will need assurances that the changes are embedded.</p> <p>He advised that the Board has seen that Cabinet have changed. You are working together and significant changes of approach are evident. You are on a journey and have made progress but there is more to do.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>The Chair offered his thanks to Sir Steve and the Independent Advisory Board and noted that he is keen to continue with the improvement journey. Cllr Brown noted that there has been a vast improvement and that we are all working together in a far better way.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NOTED</b>: the progress update report from the Chair of the Independent Advisory Board .</li> </ul>
<p>TVCA 82/25</p>	<p><b>FINAL CAPITAL &amp; REVENUE BUDGETS 2026/27, UPDATED MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27-2029/30</b></p> <p><i>Appendix 7 &amp; 8 to this report are not for publication, under the terms of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)); of schedule 12a Local Government Act 1972.)</i></p> <p>Cllr Hargreaves left the room at this point.</p> <p>The Chief Executive introduced this item by highlighting that this report is the culmination of significant work over several months. He expressed his thanks to the Interim Director of Finance &amp; Resources, the finance team, Mayor Cooke as portfolio holder and also to the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</p>

<p>The Chair advised members that appendix 7 &amp; 8 to the report are confidential. If they are to be discussed, members of the public would need to leave the room.</p> <p>Cabinet received a report which presented the final revenue budget for the Mayoral General Functions for 2026/27 for approval.</p> <p>The final revenue budget for the Combined Authority for 2026/27 was also presented for approval, together with the Medium Term Financial Plan covering the period to 2029/30.</p> <p>Key assumptions and risks in setting the final budgets for the forthcoming financial year and future years were also highlighted.</p> <p>Cabinet was asked to note the feedback from the public consultation on the draft budget proposals as presented to Cabinet in January 2026.</p> <p>Cabinet was presented with the revised three-year Capital Programme to 2029/30 for approval, together with the Authority's proposed final Capital Budget for 2026/27.</p> <p>The report set out key changes to both the revenue and capital budgets from the draft proposals presented to Cabinet on 30 January 2026.</p> <p>The report also presented the forecast usable revenue and capital reserves as of 31 March 2027 incorporating the financial implications of the proposed final revenue and capital budget impacts.</p> <p>Cabinet were recommended to:-</p> <p><b>Approve</b> the Final Budget for Mayoral Functions for 2026/27 <b>Note</b> the approved Concessionary Fares budget of £14.834m for 2026/27 <b>Approve</b> the final Combined Authority Revenue Budget for 2026/27 <b>Note</b> the consultation responses on the draft budget proposals, including the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee's comments, set out at <b>Appendix 2</b> <b>Approve</b> the revised Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2029/30 <b>Approve</b> the Final Capital Budget for 2026/27 and revised capital programme to 2029/30</p>
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**Approve** the transfers to/from reserves as set out in Table 19  
**Note** the forecast revenue reserves on 31 March 2027  
**Note** the forecast capital reserves on 31 March 2027  
**Note** the key financial risks for the MTFP period  
**Note** the S73 Officer's S25 Statement at **Appendix 6**  
**Approve** the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2026/27, included at **Appendix 4**  
**Approve** the Reserves Policy, included at **Appendix 5**  
**Approve** a contribution of up to £1m for the Hartlepool Development Corporation, from TVCA reserves, to fund its ongoing operation in 2026/27, subject to a business case, and to be funded by a drawdown on the Devolution Fund reserve. Consideration of the business case and appraisal will be delegated in accordance with the TVCA Assurance Framework to the TVCA Chief Executive for decision in consultation with Tees Valley Management Group, the Section 73 Officer and the Monitoring Officer. The business case and appraisal outcome will be shared with Cabinet.

Jo Moore, Interim Director of Finance & Resources, provided Cabinet members with an overview of the report.

Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.

Mayor Cooke advised Cabinet that a number of questions from the public had been received relating to this item and he provided verbal responses.

He also advised that he is working with Jo Moore on the cash flow and income position.

Councillor Harker noted that the report is easier to read and is more understandable and expressed his thanks to the whole finance team. He enquired what the consequences were if all the risks that are included in the report came to fruition. Jo Moore advised that she believes the budget sets out a prudent and pragmatic approach to the risks and reserves.

Councillor Evans thanked the Interim Director of Finance & Resources and noted that the report is improved and clear. She advised she is fully supportive in what is being undertaken regarding driving economic growth. She welcomed the improvement in the reserves position however expressed

concern that £1m of reserves is being allocated to Hartlepool Development Corporation and asked for confirmation that this will be a one-off payment.

She was advised that, if Cabinet approve the budget, the payment to Hartlepool Development Corporation would be subject to a satisfactory business case and that it has been made clear that the expectation is for the Development Corporation to become financially sustainable beyond 2026/27. That is not to say that the Development Corporation couldn't make a future ask of TVCA, but it would be for Cabinet to consider this.

The Interim Director of Finance & Resources advised Cabinet members that the reserves which are held are in her view appropriate to the risks facing the organisation. While holding reserves means that money is not being spent elsewhere, there needs to be sufficient money held in reserves. It is not an exact science however the balance is currently right as we go into the new financial year.

Denise McGuckin noted that TVCA is a majority shareholder in Goosepool 2019 Ltd and, as such, should be sighted on the loan agreements before they are signed.

She was advised that there is a loan agreement for the original loan to Goosepool 2019 Ltd, which is being reviewed. TVCA is also currently finalising the schedule and principle repayments for the STDC loan and a report on both the Goosepool 2019 Ltd and STDC loan agreements will be brought back to a future Cabinet meeting.

There was a query relating to the ERDF Legacy funds and Cabinet were advised that this fund does not sit within the Combined Authority. TVCA will be undertaking a piece of work which considers options for a financial instrument for the Tees Valley. It was agreed that Sarah Walker will work with Councillor Alec Brown as the portfolio holder.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:-**

- **APPROVED** the Final Budget for Mayoral Functions for 2026/27
- **NOTED** the approved Concessionary Fares budget of £14.834m for 2026/27

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the final Combined Authority Revenue Budget for 2026/27</li> <li>• <b>NOTED</b> the consultation responses on the draft budget proposals, including the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee’s comments, set out at <b>Appendix 2</b></li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the revised Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2029/30</li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the Final Capital Budget for 2026/27 and revised capital programme to 2029/30</li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the transfers to/from reserves as set out in Table 19</li> <li>• <b>NOTED</b> the forecast revenue reserves on 31 March 2027</li> <li>• <b>NOTED</b> the forecast capital reserves on 31 March 2027</li> <li>• <b>NOTED</b> the key financial risks for the MTFP period</li> <li>• <b>NOTED</b> the S73 Officer’s S25 Statement at <b>Appendix 6</b></li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2026/27, included at <b>Appendix 4</b></li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> the Reserves Policy, included at <b>Appendix 5</b></li> <li>• <b>APPROVED</b> a contribution of up to £1m for the Hartlepool Development Corporation, from TVCA reserves, to fund its ongoing operation in 2026/27, subject to a business case, and to be funded by a drawdown on the Devolution Fund reserve. Consideration of the business case and appraisal will be delegated in accordance with the TVCA Assurance Framework to the TVCA Chief Executive for decision in consultation with Tees Valley Management Group, the Section 73 Officer and the Monitoring Officer. The business case and appraisal outcome will be shared with Cabinet.</li> </ul>
<p>TVCA 83/25</p>	<p><b>QUARTER 3 FORECAST REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2025/26 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26-2028/29</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report from the Interim Director of Finance &amp; Resources which provided details of the forecast revenue and capital outturn position for Tees Valley Combined Authority for the year ending 31 March 2026.</p>

The report highlighted key assumptions used in those forecasts, together with any key financial risks, as well as details of the forecast reserves position as at the end of March 2026.

The report also provided forecasts for Capital expenditure by Directorate within the Capital Programme for 2025/26.

Cabinet were invited to:-

- A. Note the Q3 revenue forecast net deficit of £0.594m for the year ending 31 March 2026. Being a favourable change of £6.132m from the reported deficit of £6.727m at Quarter 2;
- B. Note the proposed contribution to reserves of £1.903m
- C. Approve the transfer of £1.225m for the Hydrogen Refuelling Project to an earmarked reserve to enable delivery in future years;
- D. Note the forecast revenue reserves of £41.552m as at the end of March 2026 ;
- E. Note the key financial risks for 2025/26;
- F. Note the Q3 forecast gross capital expenditure of £106.845m for financial year to 31 March 2026 being a reduction of £130.387m from Q2;
- G. Note the Capital Reserves forecast of £139.645m by the end of March 2026.

Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:-**

- A. **NOTED** the Q3 revenue forecast net deficit of £0.594m for the year ending 31 March 2026. Being a favourable change of £6.132m from the reported deficit of £6.727m at Quarter 2;
- B. **NOTED** the proposed contribution to reserves of £1.903m
- C. **APPROVED** the transfer of £1.225m for the Hydrogen Refuelling Project to an earmarked reserve to enable delivery in future years;
- D. **NOTED** the forecast revenue reserves of £41.552m as at the end of March 2026 ;
- E. **NOTED** the key financial risks for 2025/26;

	<p>F. <b>NOTED</b> the Q3 forecast gross capital expenditure of £106.845m for financial year to 31 March 2026 being a reduction of £130.387m from Q2;</p> <p>G. <b>NOTED</b> the Capital Reserves forecast of £139.645m by the end of March 2026.</p>
TVCA 84/25	<p><b>CAPITAL STRATEGY</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report from the Director of Infrastructure which requested approval of the Capital Strategy 2026/27.</p> <p>Cabinet was invited to approve the Capital Strategy 2026-27.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke enquired what the tolerance is for slippage. He was advised that there is not currently a tolerance, however, the transport programme forms the largest element of the capital programme and as it develops, it will be built in as part of the programme development.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that <b>Cabinet</b> approved the Capital Strategy 2026-27</p>
TVCA 85/25	<p><b>TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE POLICY</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report from the Interim Director of Finance &amp; Resources which requested approval of the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27 to comply with requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountant (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice.</p> <p>Cabinet were invited to:-</p> <p>A. <b>APPROVE</b> the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27;</p> <p>B. <b>APPROVE</b> the Minimum Revenue Policy 2026/27.</p> <p>The Chair expressed his thanks to both the Interim Director of Finance &amp; Resources and Mayor Cooke as portfolio holder.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p>

	<p>There were no questions or comments.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT Cabinet:-</p> <p>A. <u>APPROVED</u> the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27;</p> <p>B. <u>APPROVED</u> the Minimum Revenue Policy 2026/27.</p>
<p>TVCA 86/25</p>	<p><b>BROWNFIELD HOUSING FUND (PHASE 3)</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report by the Director of Business Solutions which provided an overview of the Brownfield Housing Fund (BHF) Phase 3.</p> <p>The report also sought Cabinet approval to commit the remaining BHF Phase 3 funding of £5.07m to Princeton Gardens in Stockton (£2.3m) and Gresham in Middlesbrough (£2.77m), subject to successful appraisal of the full Business Case in line with BHF funding conditions and in accordance with the TVCA Assurance Framework.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.</p> <p>Councillor Evans noted that the site in Stockton has laid dormant for many years so is happy that it is being recommended for funding.</p> <p>The Director of Business Solutions advised Cabinet that there had been a recent announcement on future Brownfield Housing funding. It is imperative that the strategic pipeline of sites is in place as soon as possible. She advised that consideration of viability gaps is fundamental to the discussions being held with Homes England.</p> <p>RESOLVED THAT Cabinet:-</p> <p>A. <u>APPROVED</u> the commitment of the remaining £5.07m Brownfield Housing Fund (Phase 3) from the Tees Valley Combined Authority Investment Plan to Princeton Gardens in Stockton (£2.3m) and Gresham in Middlesbrough (£2.77m), subject to successful appraisal of the full Business Case in line with BHF funding conditions and in accordance with the TVCA Assurance Framework. The recommended commitment of this funding has been subject to full appraisal, due diligence, and approval in</p>

	<p>accordance with the TVCA Assurance Framework and established decision-making processes, ensuring compliance with governance, value for money, and audit requirements.</p>
<p>TVCA 87/25</p>	<p><b>NORTHEAST &amp; YORKSHIRE NET ZERO HUB</b></p> <p>Cabinet was provided with a report from the Director of Business Solutions which requested a decision to continue as accountable body for the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub for an additional twelve months and to consider options for its future delivery at a subsequent meeting. This would extend its current funding window to March 2027 and its delivery window up to September 2027, from March and September 2026 respectively.</p> <p>Cabinet were invited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>APPROVE</b> that TVCA enters into a further 12-month Funding Agreement with the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and its partners relating to the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub;</li> <li>B. <b>NOTE</b> that in September 2025 Cabinet approved a scheme of delegation that allows the TVCA Chief Executive in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer, to execute agreements and approve budgets relating to the Net Zero Hub.</li> </ul> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions. There were no questions or comments.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED that Cabinet:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. <b>APPROVED</b> that TVCA enters into a further 12-month Funding Agreement with the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and its partners relating to the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub;</li> <li>B. <b>NOTED</b> that in September 2025 Cabinet approved a scheme of delegation that allows the TVCA Chief Executive in consultation with the Section 73 and Monitoring Officer, to execute agreements and approve budgets relating to the Net Zero Hub.</li> </ul>

<p>TVCA 88/25</p>	<p><b>LOCAL TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report by the Director of Infrastructure which outlined the new approach to Transport Funding through consolidating a number of different funding streams received by TVCA into a Mayoral Transport Fund.</p> <p>Cabinet were recommended to:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>AGREE</b> that TVCA submits the Detailed Draft Local Transport Delivery Plan to the Department for Transport to meet the March 2026 deadline.</li> <li>b. <b>AGREE</b> to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to manage the remainder of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme to ensure that the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Transport and TVCA are met, particularly by accelerating the delivery of TCR schemes to ensure CRSTS funding is fully committed by March 2027, with the remainder of the CRSTS schemes to be delivered as part of the Mayoral Transport Fund allocation.</li> <li>c. <b>AGREE</b> to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to progress business cases for each project/package/programme within the Local Transport Delivery Plan, including authorisation to spend up to 10% of the total approved Investment Package allocations, for the purposes of carrying out feasibility, design and project development work to support the preparation of project/package/programme Business Cases. Project/package/programme Business cases will be approved in accord with the scheme of delegation set out in the new Single Assurance Framework.</li> <li>d. <b>AGREE</b> to receive a further report which will seek approval for TVCA to submit the Final Local Transport Delivery Plan to the Department for Transport to meet the September 2026 deadline. TVCA officers will work with Local Authority officers, Transport Committee Members, Cabinet Members and DfT to further refine</li> </ol>
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	<p>the projects/packages/programmes set out in the Detailed Draft Local Transport Delivery Plan ahead of this submission.</p> <p>e. <b>AGREE</b> to receive a quarterly update report on progress in delivering the Local Transport Delivery Plan and an annual report outlining proposed revisions and updates to the Local Transport Delivery Plan to reflect progress and proposed changes to projects/packages/programmes.</p> <p>f. <b>AGREE</b> to delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to deliver the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2026/27 – 2028/29), in line with the funding allocation outlined in the Local Transport Delivery Plan, including continuing to invest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) enhancing the customer experience,</li> <li>b) improved fares offers by continuing the u22 fares offer and Tees Pass for care leavers ,</li> <li>c) supported bus services, and</li> <li>d) other expenditure.</li> </ul> <p>Approval for the projects/packages within the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan programme will be reported through the Enhanced Bus Partnership and approved in accord with the scheme of delegation set out in the new Single Assurance Framework.</p> <p>g. <b>AGREE</b> to delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Accountable Cabinet Member and the Enhanced Bus Partnership Members to take any urgent decisions in relation to the use of the Contingency fund (as set out in paragraphs 6.33 &amp; 6.34) within the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2026/27 – 2028/29), on an exceptional basis and where the urgency of decision cannot wait until a meeting of Cabinet.</p> <p>h. <b>AGREE</b> the proposed changes to the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2025/26) and delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to deliver the amendments,</p> <p>i. <b>NOTE</b> the additional Zero Emission Bus Regional Assistance (ZEBRA) funding which has been secured, alongside investment by the bus operators, to support the delivery of the BSIP by further decarbonising the bus fleet in Tees Valley through the introduction of more electric vehicles.</p>
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Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.

Councillor Brown enquired whether Cabinet members would see details of any underspend on any of the schemes and he was advised that there is now more flexibility meaning any underspend would go back into the overall Transport fund for consideration by Cabinet.

Cabinet was advised that work is ongoing to look at how other public and private investment can be leveraged off the back of the devolved funding. They were advised that the zero emission buses have been funded through bids into government and by the operators.

Councillor Evans enquired why the funding for the Active Travel Hubs was reduced. She was advised that it was reduced because our Active Travel capability rating was downgraded.

She also asked whether each individual hub could be looked at on their merits – how they perform and how they are used by the public.

It was acknowledged by the Chief Executive that the active travel hub issue should have been brought to Cabinet earlier, but a commitment was made that officers will work closely with Cabinet as the review is undertaken. The short-term extension will give us some time to look at what the long term future looks like. A long term sustainable position is needed for the Hubs which may involve some hubs moving to fit in with the bigger transport programme. TVCA will work closely with Cabinet to obtain the best solution for all. The Chief Executive agreed to provide evidence of engagement with local authority officers on the Active Travel Hubs proposal.

Cabinet was advised that the Transport Committee have reviewed the bus service priorities and have come up with proposals of how to use the Mayoral Transport Fund allocation over the course of the next 3 years.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Harker and the Transport Committee members for their work on this. In turn, Councillor Harker passed his thanks on to all the transport team at TVCA, particularly Emily Campbell.

Councillor Hargreaves noted that she has received several emails from concerned residents from East Cleveland. They have all been responded to and she thanked them for taking the time to contact her.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet:-

- A. **AGREED** that TVCA submits the Detailed Draft Local Transport Delivery Plan to the Department for Transport to meet the March 2026 deadline.
- B. **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to manage the remainder of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme to ensure that the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Transport and TVCA are met, particularly by accelerating the delivery of TCR schemes to ensure CRSTS funding is fully committed by March 2027, with the remainder of the CRSTS schemes to be delivered as part of the Mayoral Transport Fund allocation.
- C. **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to progress business cases for each project/package/programme within the Local Transport Delivery Plan, including authorisation to spend up to 10% of the total approved Investment Package allocations, for the purposes of carrying out feasibility, design and project development work to support the preparation of project/package/programme Business Cases.
  - a. Project/package/programme Business cases will be approved in accord with the scheme of delegation set out in the new Single Assurance Framework.
- D. **AGREED** to receive a further report which will seek approval for TVCA to submit the Final Local Transport Delivery Plan to the Department for Transport to meet the September 2026 deadline.
  - a. TVCA officers will work with Local Authority officers, Transport Committee Members, Cabinet Members and DfT to further refine the projects/packages/programmes set out in the Detailed Draft Local Transport Delivery Plan ahead of this submission.

	<p>E. <b>AGREED</b> to receive a quarterly update report on progress in delivering the Local Transport Delivery Plan and an annual report outlining proposed revisions and updates to the Local Transport Delivery Plan to reflect progress and proposed changes to projects/packages/programmes.</p> <p>F. <b>AGREED</b> to delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to deliver the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2026/27 – 2028/29), in line with the funding allocation outlined in the Local Transport Delivery Plan, including continuing to invest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) enhancing the customer experience, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. b) improved fares offers by continuing the u22 fares offer and Tees Pass for care leavers ,</li> <li>b. c) supported bus services, and</li> <li>c. d) other expenditure.</li> <li>d. Approval for the projects/packages within the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan programme will be reported through the Enhanced Bus Partnership and approved in accord with the scheme of delegation set out in the new Single Assurance Framework.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>G. <b>AGREED</b> to delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Accountable Cabinet Member and the Enhanced Bus Partnership Members to take any urgent decisions in relation to the use of the Contingency fund (as set out in paragraphs 6.33 &amp; 6.34) within the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2026/27 – 2028/29), on an exceptional basis and where the urgency of decision cannot wait until a meeting of Cabinet.</p> <p>H. <b>AGREED</b> the proposed changes to the Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan Investment programme (2025/26) and delegate responsibility to the Director of Infrastructure to take all decisions required to deliver the amendments,</p> <p>I. <b>NOTED</b> the additional Zero Emission Bus Regional Assistance (ZEBRA) funding which has been secured, alongside investment by the bus operators, to support the delivery of the BSIP by further decarbonising the bus fleet in Tees Valley through the introduction of more electric vehicles.</p>
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<p>TVCA 89/25</p>	<p><b>PROCUREMENT &amp; COMMERCIAL STRATEGY</b></p> <p>Cabinet was presented with a report from the Interim Director of Finance &amp; Resources requesting approval of the Procurement &amp; Commercial Strategy.</p> <p>Members were invited to approve the Procurement &amp; Commercial Strategy.</p> <p>Members were given the opportunity to comment or ask questions</p> <p>Councillor Hargreaves noted that, as constituent Local Authorities we should be working together and sharing good practice and principles.</p> <p>Mayor Cooke agreed that sharing good practice would be beneficial as well as sharing supplier experiences. He also noted that TVCA should develop an AI policy.</p> <p>Following questions relating to Social Value, Cabinet was advised that an Action Plan is being developed, alongside a procurement dashboard which will be interactive. A Social Value officer will also be recruited who will look at all contracts.</p> <p>Following questions raised in a recent Mayoral Question Time, the Tees Valley Mayor requested the addition of a clause relating to the Supreme Court judgement on women only spaces be included in the Procurement &amp; Commercial Strategy. This would require anyone contracting with the Combined Authority to ensure they follow the law, relating to this ruling, and any deviation from this would result in breach of contract. This was unanimously agreed by the Cabinet.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED that Cabinet:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>APPROVED</u> the Procurement &amp; Commercial Strategy</b></p>
	<p><b>DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2026 at 10:00am</li> <li>• Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 10:00am</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked all in attendance.</p>

DRAFT

## REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION

Deputy Leader of the Council – Councillor Paul Rowling

# Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-2030 - Implementation Update

## Summary

This report presents an updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 and provides an update on its implementation.

The updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 provides a strengthened strategic framework for managing the Council’s land and property estate.

Building on the version previously approved by Cabinet in December 2024, this updated SAMP tightens the Council’s strategy and policy approach, strengthens the Corporate Landlord Model, enhances asset categorisation, and introduces a more structured and transparent process for asset challenges and decision-making.

The updated SAMP provides greater clarity for Members, senior officers, and operational teams, ensuring that asset decisions are consistent, evidence-led, and aligned with the Council’s wider priorities, including financial sustainability, regeneration and inclusive growth, community outcomes, and environmental responsibility.

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

- 1. Strengthened Strategic Clarity**  
To approve an updated SAMP that provides a more transparent, more structured and more accessible strategic framework for managing the Council’s land and property assets.
- 2. Improved Asset Challenge and Decision-Making**  
To formalise a more straightforward asset challenge process, including defined stages, asset categorisation, and decision pathways, to support transparent and defensible asset decisions.
- 3. Alignment with Corporate Priorities**  
To ensure the Council’s asset base is explicitly aligned with the Stockton-on-Tees Plan, the Medium-Term Financial Plan, regeneration objectives, inclusive growth ambitions and sustainability commitments.

#### 4. **Ongoing Flexibility and Responsiveness**

To delegate authority for future updates to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, ensuring the SAMP remains a live and responsive strategic document.

#### 5. **Embedding the Corporate Landlord Model**

The transition to a Corporate Landlord approach, ensuring centralised strategic oversight, consistent standards across the estate, improved utilisation and performance and reduced duplication and inefficiency.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approve the updated Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030 as set out in Appendix 1.
2. Note the key updates and improvements made to the SAMP since the previously approved version, including strengthened strategy, policy, asset categorisation and asset challenge arrangements.
3. Note the progress made in implementing the SAMP, particularly in relation to the disposal of surplus assets and improved asset performance through reviews.
4. Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Leader, to approve future updates to the SAMP to ensure it remains current, responsive and aligned with corporate priorities. Significant changes or departures from the agreed strategic direction will continue to be reported to Cabinet as appropriate

### **Detail**

1. The Council owns and occupies a diverse portfolio of land and property assets, including operational buildings, community facilities, commercial properties and land holdings. These assets represent a significant corporate resource and financial commitment and must be managed strategically to support service delivery, economic sustainability, regeneration and community outcomes.
2. The updated SAMP responds to ongoing financial pressures, service transformation, changing patterns of occupation and increased focus on sustainability, while ensuring statutory compliance and good governance.
3. The updated SAMP retains the overall strategic intent approved by Cabinet but introduces several significant enhancements to improve clarity, consistency and delivery.
4. The SAMP reinforces the Council's move to a fully centralised Corporate Landlord Model to ensure assets are managed consistently, risks are controlled, and opportunities for rationalisation, regeneration and income generation are maximised. It ensures:
  - Ownership and strategic management of all assets is held corporately
  - Service areas act as corporate tenants
  - Decisions on investment, maintenance, acquisition and disposal are taken in the corporate interest

## **What Has Been Updated Since the Previous SAMP**

### **5. Strategy and Policy Strengthened**

5.1. The strategy section has been tightened to provide a clearer line of sight between:

- Corporate objectives
- Asset management rules and principles; and
- Delivery outcomes

5.2. The policy position has been clarified to reinforce the Council's commitment to a Corporate Landlord Model, ensuring consistent management, reduced duplication, improved value for money, and greater transparency and accountability.

### **6. Clearer Asset Categorisation**

6.1. Assets are now clearly grouped into defined categories to support more consistent assessment and decision-making:

- Operational – Direct
- Operational – Indirect
- Commercial (non-investment)
- Community Facilities
- Investment Assets
- Community, Environmental & Cultural Assets
- Surplus
- Assets Held for Sale

6.2 This categorisation improves transparency and ensures that assets are assessed against appropriate strategic expectations.

### **7. Enhanced Asset Challenge Process**

7.1 The asset challenge has been refined to recognise that different asset categories require different levels of assessment and decision-making. This ensures assets are assessed proportionally, reflecting their strategic purpose, risk profile, income potential and service impact. This flexible approach strengthens decision-making, avoids a one-size-fits-all process and ensures the asset challenge remains robust, targeted and fit for purpose across the whole estate.

7.2 The PULSES scoring framework has been strengthened, with clearer indicative score ranges linked to decision pathways, including retain, repurpose, dispose, or acquire. This improves consistency and understanding across the organisation.

### **8. Corporate Landlord Implementation**

8.1 The Council continues to embed a Corporate Landlord approach, improving:

- Coordination across services
- Strengthened governance arrangements and strategic oversight of the estate

- Evidence-based decisions: use of asset data, PULSE scoring and performance measures
- Financial Discipline: improved oversight of property costs and investment decisions
- Reviews of key parts of the estate to inform future decisions.

## 9. Implementation disposals

9.1 Through the review of assets, we have identified the following surplus assets that have been sold, are in the process of being sold, or are being marketed for sale.

### **Disposed and receipt received**

- Ideal House, Thornaby
- 18-20 Yarm Lane, Stockton

**Total                    £430,000**

### **Sold Subject to Contract (STC)**

- 22 Leeholme Road, Billingham
- South Thornaby Community Centre, Thornaby
- Port Clarence Shops
- 81A Norton Ave, Norton
- 70 Norton Road, Stockton
- Kiosk, Port Clarence
- 10-12 Norton Road, Stockton
- 159-160 High Street, Stockton
- Cowpen Hall, Hereford Terrace, Billingham
- Land at Boathouse Lane, Stockton

### **On the Market**

- 12-16 Church Road, Stockton
- Bayheath House, Prince Regent Street, Stockton
- Tithebarn House, High Newham Road, Stockton

**Total estimated capital receipt (STC and On the Market): £2,600,000**

9.2 The estimated capital receipt assumes assets sell for their current asking price.

## **Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment**

The SAMP is a broad Council-wide strategy that will inform subsequent strategic decisions regarding Council-owned assets. The potential impact of these decisions will be assessed individually against the Equality Act 2010.

The SAMP aligns with the Council's Powering Our Future (POF) programme, which has a long-term vision for Stockton-on-Tees. One of the POF missions relevant to the SAMP is the Regeneration Mission, which aims to create additional employment opportunities, reduce service demand, and achieve financial savings. The POF programme's Communities Mission is also relevant, as the SAMP will identify community needs and take action to deliver meaningful benefits. The best possible outcomes for the local community are a key aim of the SAMP.

Further Cabinet Member briefings will inform members of significant actions and decisions following the SAMP's adoption.

An EPIA has been completed. The Council has considered how the proposed SAMP could affect groups within the 12 protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The impact is neutral.

### **Corporate Parenting Implications**

The SAMP will consider the needs of children and young people, particularly through assets that support services for children and families. Any property-related changes will consider the safety, accessibility, and well-being of young residents. If no direct implications are identified, this will be noted.

### **Financial Implications**

The capital receipts already received have been accounted for within the budget report presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026 as part of the £1.428m being allocated.

The allocation of any future capital receipts will require a decision to be made by Council in line with the constitution

Any ongoing revenue savings / costs are considered as part of any proposed disposal. Any savings will support the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan through the Asset Management Transformation Review.

### **Legal Implications**

All asset-related decisions taken under the SAMP will comply with relevant legislation and the Council's constitutional and governance arrangements. Legal Services will continue to be consulted as appropriate.

### **Risk Assessment**

The updated SAMP reduces risk by strengthening governance, improving asset data, and providing clearer decision pathways. Risks associated with asset performance, compliance and financial exposure are mitigated through structured review and oversight.

### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)**

All wards will be affected. As this is an updated SAMP, consultation with key stakeholders will inform its development, and future asset reviews will engage relevant ward councillors and community groups as needed.

### **Background Papers**

Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025–2030

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# Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-2030

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan provides a strategic direction for managing our land and property portfolio. It outlines key objectives and actions to maximise the use of land and buildings, drive regeneration and inclusive growth, and support community needs, all while promoting sustainability and value for money.



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## Foreword

Effective asset management is crucial to ensuring that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council can deliver high-quality services to our residents, foster economic growth, and promote the well-being of our communities.

As we navigate a complex and rapidly changing environment, the need for a clear and strategic approach to managing our assets has never been more critical. This Strategic Asset Management Plan outlines our commitment to making informed, transparent, and future-focused decisions that benefit our community. Through this strategy, we will optimise the use of our assets, reduce operational costs, and seize opportunities for regeneration and financial growth, all while contributing to Stockton-on-Tees' long-term vision.

This document reflects our values, prioritising environmental sustainability, inclusivity, and our borough's economic resilience. It will guide how we manage our portfolio over the coming years, ensuring that every decision we make aligns with the Council's overarching objectives and the best interests of our residents.

I am confident that this strategy will provide the foundation for a stronger, more vibrant Stockton-on-Tees and support the delivery of essential services for future generations.

***Lisa Evans, Leader of the Council***

# Introduction

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council holds circa 300 freehold and leasehold buildings and 4,638 acres (1,877 hectares) of land. As of 31 March 2024, the combined value of its land and property assets, including infrastructure assets, was £423,074,000. These assets are not merely physical structures but critical resources that facilitate the Council's service delivery, foster community development, and contribute significantly to the borough's economic, environmental, and social well-being.

As a significant land and property owner, the Council can lead and influence growth and regeneration throughout the borough. By leveraging its assets, the Council will support housing, employment, and commercial development, contributing to the economic vitality of Stockton-on-Tees. Continuous optimisation can also ensure assets generate significant financial returns and provide meaningful community benefits.

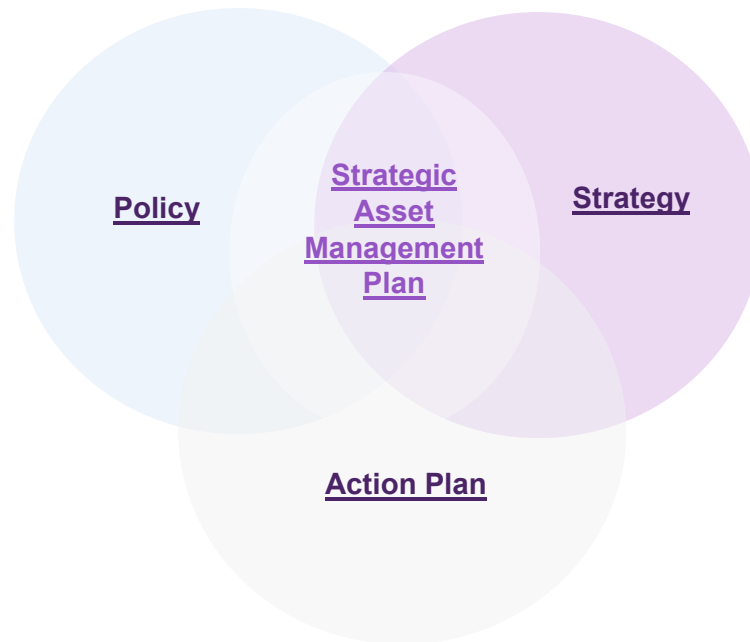
The Council is committed to delivering the best outcomes for the local community, making property decisions that reflect its long-term vision and contributing to the growth and prosperity of Stockton-on-Tees. This includes maximising the value of assets and ensuring that they align with its strategic objectives.

This Strategic Asset Management Plan has been developed to ensure that the Council's land and property portfolio contributes to achieving its corporate ambitions outlined in the Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024-2028 and other relevant corporate strategies. This ensures asset management is embedded in the decision-making processes across the Council, allowing for consistent, transparent, and forward-thinking asset management that supports the Council's priorities. This strategy is built around six [key SAMP objectives](#) for our assets, each of which is critical to achieving the Council's long-term vision for our assets.

The Council is committed to achieving value for money and must continuously review how the portfolio is utilised to deliver the best possible outcomes. The Council has statutory obligations under the Local Government Act 1999, Part 1, specifically the Best Value Duty, regarding land and property assets. The legislation states the Council must "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Strategic Asset Management Plan underpins compliance with the legislation.

This Strategic Asset Management Plan excludes the Council's highway infrastructure and assets, the management of which is the subject of a separate Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy.

# SAMP Structure



The Strategic Asset Management Plan is a suite of documents divided into three elements and structured accordingly.

1. **Strategy:** Sets out the direction for change and strategically outlines what the Council wants to achieve from its land and property assets in the context of its organisational objectives and priorities. It will translate organisational objectives into land and property objectives.
2. **Policy:** Establishes the rules and principles by which land and buildings will be managed. It provides the framework for how activities will be undertaken and will ensure performance is efficiently managed to support the Council's strategic objectives and legislative requirements.
3. **Action Plan:** This actionable live plan provides specific steps and timelines for achieving the strategy's objectives. It is designed to adapt and respond to changing needs and circumstances.

Each component will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure relevance and responsiveness to evolving needs.



# Asset Management Strategy 2025 - 2030

## Direction for Change

The Asset Management Strategy (AMS) provides direction for change regarding what the Council aims to achieve from its land and property assets over the next five years. It bridges the Council's land and property assets with its corporate objectives and priorities. The asset management function organises, configures, and invests in land and property assets to support strategic corporate outcomes. It treats land and property as important enablers in realising corporate objectives and contributing to the delivery of public services.

The Asset Management Strategy will be reviewed and amended within five years to ensure the estate fully supports the Council's overarching vision.

## Corporate Drivers

The following corporate drivers inform the Asset Management Strategy, ensuring that our land and property decisions support the Council's ambitions. [Appendix 1](#) outlines how these will be aligned and performance measured.

### 1. Stockton on Tees Plan

The Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024 sets the vision for the borough's future. It is a guiding framework for the Council, its partners, and communities to work together towards a shared future that brings this vision to life. The plan outlines five priorities to achieve the vision over the next five years.

### 2. Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provides the strategic framework for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's financial planning over the coming years, focusing on resilience, sustainability, and the effective use of resources. The SAMP aligns closely with the MTFP by contributing to key financial strategies, supporting the optimisation of assets, and enabling the delivery of the Council's broader priorities.

### 3. Powering our Future programme

The Powering Our Future programme is a transformative initiative that fosters innovation, efficiency, and regeneration, while addressing financial challenges and enhancing community outcomes. The SAMP is a critical mechanism for achieving the programme's objectives by optimising the Council's land and property assets.

### 4. Inclusive Growth Strategy

The Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025–2028 sets a vision for broad-based economic growth that benefits the widest range of people and places across Stockton-on-Tees. It focuses on reducing inequalities, fostering economic inclusion, and ensuring that the wealth generated within the Borough is distributed equitably.

### 5. Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy

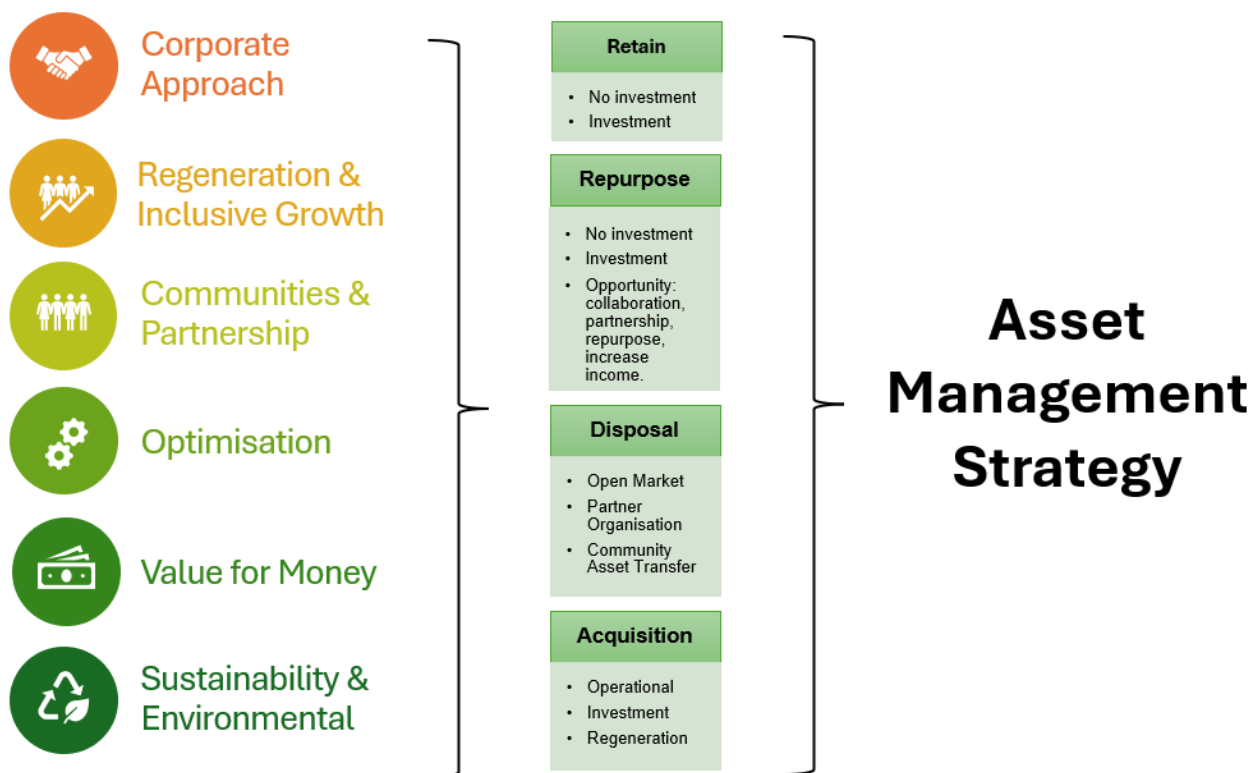
The Council's Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022–2032 outlines a comprehensive approach to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2032, enhancing the natural environment, promoting resource efficiency, and adapting to climate change. The SAMP plays a pivotal role in realising these objectives by ensuring that the Council's land and property assets are managed in alignment with sustainability and carbon reduction goals.

## SAMP Objectives

The SAMP ensures that the Council’s assets contribute meaningfully to delivering frontline services, support operational needs, and align with broader corporate strategies. By evaluating how assets are used, maintained, and adapted to meet future priorities, the SAMP provides a framework to maximise their potential. Each asset must contribute positively to service delivery, community impact, or growth opportunities. As service priorities evolve, the portfolio must adapt to meet these changing demands, ensuring that assets remain fit for purpose, flexible, and responsive.

The SAMP emphasises deriving maximum value from assets through financial gains, enhanced service delivery, or community benefits. By embedding a routine challenge process, the Council ensures that properties are appropriately utilised and contribute to a positive user and customer experience.




We have identified the following six key SAMP objectives as having the most significant contribution to achieving our goals for our land and property, in line with the Council’s objectives.



SAMP Objectives	+	<a href="#">Decision Pathways</a>	=	Asset Management Strategy
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Combining these key SAMP objectives with the outcomes of retaining, repurposing, disposing of, and acquiring assets will form the basis of analysis, debate, critical evaluation, and prioritisation of the Asset Management Strategy for the next five years.

The following table illustrates how the SAMP's key objectives align with our corporate objectives. It outlines the purpose behind these objectives, the methods for achieving them, and the performance measures used to track progress. By aligning these measures with the Asset Challenge, we ensure that decisions are based on evidence and contribute to our broader economic resilience, sustainability, and community well-being goals.

SAMP Objectives and Corporate Drivers	
 <b>Corporate Approach</b> <b>Corporate Drivers</b> • Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • Powering Our Future Programme	
<b>Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use assets as a corporate resource to support wider strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Establish a Corporate Landlord Model to ensure decisions align with the Council’s strategic aims.</li> <li>• Implement consistent policies and standards throughout the Council.</li> </ul>	<b>Performance Measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating centralised governance in decision-making and management.</li> <li>• Ensuring the availability and accuracy of property data to support operational and strategic decisions.</li> </ul>
 <b>Regeneration &amp; Inclusive Growth</b> <b>Corporate Drivers</b> • Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • Powering Our Future Programme • Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025-2028	
<b>Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land and buildings should stimulate development and economic growth</li> <li>• Release surplus land for housing and commercial development to stimulate local economic growth.</li> <li>• Support local business needs and promote new business opportunities.</li> </ul>	<b>Performance Measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress of regeneration projects linked to Council-owned land and property.</li> <li>• Amount of land released for housing or commercial purposes.</li> <li>• Evidence of incubation spaces and economic initiatives supported by Council assets.</li> </ul>
 <b>Communities &amp; Partnership</b> <b>Corporate Drivers</b> • Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • A Fairer Stockton on Tees Framework • Communities Strategy • Powering Our Future Programme	
<b>Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strong partnerships</li> <li>• Working together to address community needs.</li> <li>• Work with public and private sector partners to identify opportunities for shared use of assets.</li> </ul>	<b>Performance Measure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced service delivery and community satisfaction through co-located facilities.</li> <li>• Number and quality of partnerships established for the shared use of council properties.</li> </ul>

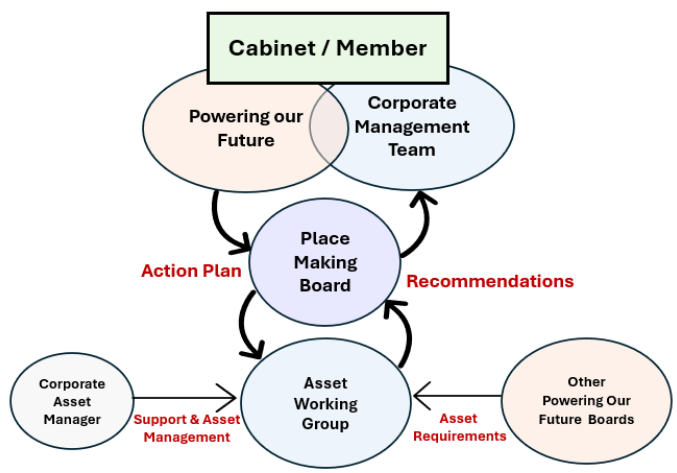
<b>Corporate Drivers</b>	
 <p><b>Optimisation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • Powering Our Future Programme</li> <li>• Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025-2028</li> </ul>
<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retained assets are suitable for their intended purpose, located appropriately, and utilised efficiently to meet current and future service needs.</li> <li>• Conduct regular reviews to identify underused or surplus assets for improved utilisation or disposal.</li> <li>• Implement smarter working practices to maximise space usage, including hot-desking and flexible office layouts.</li> <li>• Rationalise and consolidate space to minimise redundant properties and optimise the usage of key hubs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of assets evaluated under the Asset Challenge framework each year.</li> <li>• Enhancements in space efficiency, including decreases in unused or redundant areas.</li> <li>• Reduction in the overall footprint and related operational costs.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Drivers</b>	
 <p><b>Value for Money</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • Powering Our Future Programme</li> <li>• Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025-2028</li> </ul>
<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To challenge occupation and utilisation, maximise returns, minimise operational costs, and enhance service delivery.</li> <li>• Prioritise investments in high-performing assets to secure long-term financial and service benefits.</li> <li>• Apply evidence-based decision-making processes, such as option appraisals, to assess the financial viability of projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of operational cost savings achieved through rationalisation and optimisation initiatives.</li> <li>• Improvements in financial returns and utilisation rates of prioritised assets.</li> <li>• Proportion of decisions informed by option appraisals and robust business cases.</li> </ul>
<b>Corporate Drivers</b>	
 <p><b>Sustainability &amp; Environmental</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockton on Tees Plan 2024-2028 • Powering Our Future Programme</li> <li>• Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022–2032</li> </ul>
<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster a sustainable environment that seeks to reduce overall consumption and related emissions.</li> <li>• Implement renewable energy solutions at key operational sites, which may include solar panels, battery storage, wind technology and heat pumps.</li> <li>• Enhance biodiversity by converting underused land into green spaces.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions throughout the property portfolio.</li> <li>• Number of council properties employing renewable energy solutions.</li> <li>• Protect and enhance the biodiversity value of land.</li> <li>• Percentage of green space compartments in active or appropriate management for biodiversity.</li> </ul>

# Governance

The Council's constitution outlines how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the rules and procedures followed to ensure it is efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people. The constitution designates the Director for Regeneration and Inclusive Growth as responsible for managing property assets, with specific functions being delegated. The Director for Regeneration and Inclusive Growth and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Housing act as custodians and stewards of the property portfolio, endorsing the strategic and operational plans to ensure effective management. Strategic asset management is retained in-house to establish and define the Council's property needs. A property manager will be appointed to oversee the estate and facilities, including repairs, maintenance, and statutory compliance assurance as necessary.




The Asset Working Group and Placemaking Board were established in late 2024 to ensure a corporate approach to managing property assets.

As described in the flowchart below, under the direction of the Asset Working Group, the Corporate Asset Manager, through the Corporate Landlord team, will serve as the primary body responsible for carrying out the Asset Challenge and reporting Performance Measures and Opportunities. It will make recommendations to the Asset Working Group that align with the Council's corporate objectives. The Asset Working Group will also oversee the implementation of the Asset management action plan as directed by the Asset Working Group/Placemaking Board/Corporate Management Team/Cabinet approval (as necessary). The Corporate Asset Manager role, through the Corporate Landlord team, will manage and rationalise the asset portfolio on behalf of the Asset Working Group.



The Transformation Project Teams/POF boards will primarily drive service-led asset requirements, with the Placemaking Board and Corporate Management Team providing the strategic direction. This governance structure supports a corporate approach to asset management, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the Council and its residents.

The Asset Working Group will:

-  Ensure consistency and transparency in asset decisions across all service areas.
-  Monitor the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Action Plan.
-  Provide oversight on managing individual assets, including retention, repurposing, and disposal decisions.

# Asset Management Policy 2025-2030

This Asset Management Policy establishes clear rules and principles for managing our land and buildings. It provides the framework under which all land and property-related activities will be undertaken. It will ensure we can effectively and consistently measure and manage performance to support the Council Plan and Corporate objectives. It will remain in place for five years but will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance.

## Corporate Landlord

The principles of a Corporate Landlord model are fundamental in directing how our assets are managed. Implementing a Corporate Landlord Model ensures that all asset-related decisions align with the Council's broader strategic goals, including financial efficiency, supporting economic growth, sustainability, and excellence in service delivery. The key principles of the Corporate Landlord Model are:

1. **Centralised control of all assets**, including operational land, buildings, and investment properties. Service areas operate as tenants, utilising these assets based on business needs while complying with governance protocols.
2. **Enhanced Accountability and Governance:** The Asset Working Group/Placemaking Board/Corporate Management Team/Cabinet approval (as necessary) will strategically review and approve all asset-related decisions to ensure transparency, compliance, and alignment with Council objectives.
3. **Roles and Responsibilities:** The Asset Working will promote efficiency and compliance by serving as custodians of the Council's assets.

By managing the land and property portfolio as a corporate resource, assets can be continually reviewed against defined criteria, ensuring that strategic objectives are met. Property performance measures can be assessed against suitability and sufficiency for current and future operational needs through an Asset Challenge process. The Council aims to reduce the overall size of the property portfolio and achieve a more cost-effective and efficient use of our assets in the long term. The Asset Challenge process will highlight opportunities to maximise operational use, rationalisation, and portfolio transformation.

## Rules, Behaviours, and Culture

All decisions about the land and property portfolio must be evidence-based and fully appraised. This requires reference to and analysis of comprehensive and robust property data. The Action Plan includes reviewing the most suitable system for storing our data and legal documentation, as well as an integrated system to align and integrate repairs and maintenance, statutory compliance, and case management.

## Culture

To ensure land and property assets are managed as a corporate resource and support the Council's key objectives, ambitions and priorities:

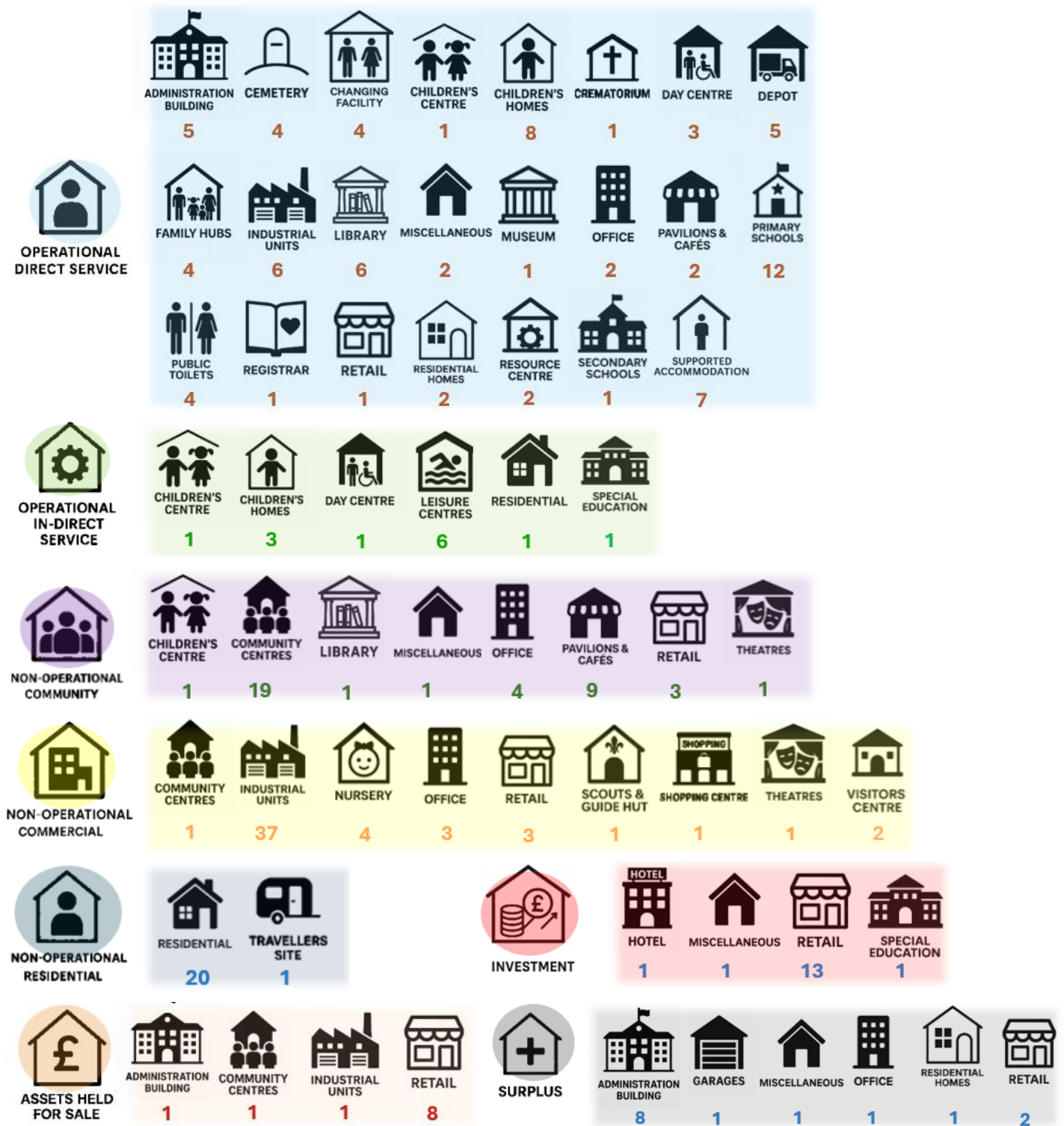
- All land and property assets are held as corporate resources. The Corporate Landlord team will coordinate all land and property data, using it to inform strategic planning and decision-making. Services will liaise with the Corporate Landlord team to address property requirements and plan for future needs.
- Decisions on assets follow the governance process.
- All assets are categorised correctly and managed according to best practices.
- A corporate approach promoting transparency and consistency, setting clear expectations for behaviours and decision-making processes.

# Overview of Corporate Property

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council holds approximately 300 buildings, comprising both freehold and leasehold properties, as well as a significant land portfolio of 4,638 acres (1,877 hectares).

Excluding School Academy Transfers and Community Asset Transfers, as these are removed from the balance sheet, the total number of properties held as at September 2025 is circa 250, as detailed in Appendix 5.

Our assets, by categorisation and type, are as follows:



# Asset Categorisation

To align with the principles of effective asset management and the broader objectives of the SAMP, we have segmented our land and property portfolio into distinct categories. This segmentation ensures a clear framework for retaining assets, measuring performance, and implementing targeted management strategies to maximise each asset category while supporting corporate priorities.

Each asset is categorised according to its primary purpose, such as whether the Council holds it for operational or non-operational purposes.

Asset Category	Asset Objectives
<p><b>Operational</b> Assets used to directly support Council service delivery, together with those operated by partner organisations.</p>	
<p><b>Direct Service</b>  Utilised in the direct provision of services for which the Council has either statutory or discretionary responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise contribution to corporate objectives.</li> <li>• Conduct Asset Challenge reviews.</li> <li>• Identify underuse for repurpose or disposal.</li> <li>• Explore alternative delivery (e.g. partnerships).</li> <li>• Dispose of surplus where no alternative use is identified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Indirect Service</b>  As above, except leased to a third party for the delivery of the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support third-party service delivery through leases.</li> <li>• Maximise the cost-effective use of Council assets to enable service delivery by organisations in partnership.</li> <li>• Identify assets for match funding to leverage external funding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-Operational</b> Assets not actively employed in service delivery may be retained for income, strategic purposes, or future development. Appropriate management ensures they contribute to the council's strategic objectives.</p>	
<p><b>Commercial (non-investment) portfolio</b>  Assets are leased mainly for financial return; however, this may not be the primary purpose of holding them, as they may also serve broader community, social, or economic roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leases for financial return while supporting social/economic objectives.</li> <li>• Balance revenue generation with strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Manage efficiently to maintain asset value.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Facilities Portfolio</b>  Assets where the occupier is not aiming to generate income or achieve a commercial return. Their strategic purpose will likely focus on promoting various non-financial corporate outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support non-financial outcomes (e.g., healthy lifestyles, general well-being, inclusive communities).</li> <li>• Ensure affordability for community use.</li> <li>• Encourage local engagement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Investment portfolio</b>  Used exclusively for generating rental income and/or capital appreciation without any intended broader community, social, or economic role.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise rental income and capital appreciation.</li> <li>• Apply clear retention/disposal criteria.</li> <li>• Proactively enhance value and reduce voids and rent arrears.</li> <li>• Maximise rental income and minimise rent arrears.</li> <li>• Ensure tenants maintain the property in accordance with the repair covenants to protect the investment.</li> <li>• Review the portfolio to identify opportunities to increase income and capital receipt opportunities</li> </ul>

<p><b>Surplus</b></p> <p>Vacant assets which are surplus to requirements and need to be sold or redeveloped.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify through service reviews and rationalisation.</li> <li>• Examining alternative uses before declaring surplus, e.g., employment, regeneration, affordable housing, and community use.</li> <li>• Align with asset disposal strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Asset Held For Sale</b></p> <p>An asset is available for immediate sale in its current condition. A sale is highly probable, and it has received Council authority for sale and is actively marketed at a reasonable market price.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Council approval is in place for disposal.</li> <li>• Actively market.</li> <li>• Ensure disposal within a set timeframe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community, Environmental &amp; Cultural Assets</b></p> <p>Assets intended to be held in perpetuity, with no determinable useful life, may have restrictions on their disposal, such as parks (excluding any facilities within them that support other services or activities outside the park) and land designated for cemeteries and crematoria (not including the operational land and buildings associated with them).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain for long-term public use.</li> <li>• Ensure cost-effective maintenance.</li> <li>• Comply with any disposal restrictions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infrastructure Assets</b></p> <p>Assets that are not transferable to another party, whose expenditure can only be recouped through the continued use of the created asset. Examples of infrastructure assets include highways and footpaths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align with Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy.</li> </ul>

# Asset Challenge

The Council applies a structured challenge process to critically assess the performance, suitability, and strategic value of all assets. This process helps determine the decision pathway of retention, repurposing, disposal, or acquisition, supporting effective long-term planning and alignment with service needs and corporate priorities.

All assets are assigned to one of the following categories to guide their review:

- **Operational – Direct Service:** Assets used to directly deliver front-line services to the public
- **Operational – Indirect Service:** As above, except delivered by a third-party.
- **Commercial (Non-Investment):** Income-generating properties, but this may not be the primary purpose of holding them, as they may also serve broader community, social, or economic roles.
- **Community Facilities:** Assets where the occupier is not aiming to generate income or achieve a commercial return. Their strategic purpose will likely focus on promoting various non-financial corporate outcomes. Assets often used by or shared with community groups or charities
- **Investment Assets:** Properties held primarily to generate income or capital appreciation

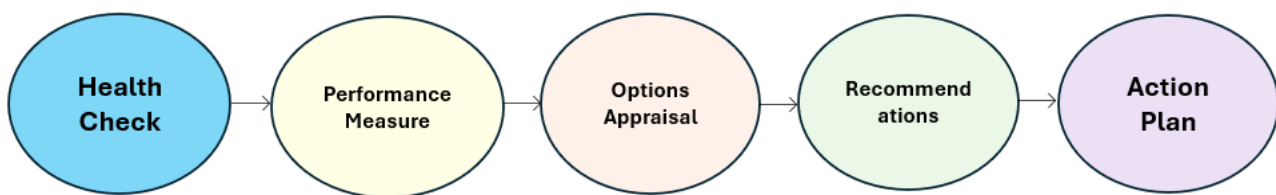
These categories support a consistent assessment of performance, risk, and opportunity.

Investment Assets follow a separate strategy focused on income, yield, and capital appreciation, which are reviewed through the [Investment Portfolio Strategy](#).

The remaining asset categories will undergo the same five-stage Asset Challenge process; their assessment and management approaches differ based on control, responsibility, and financial considerations.

## Five-Stage Asset Challenge

Each will follow a five-stage Asset Challenge process to identify its most effective use and ensure alignment with the Council’s strategic objectives.



### Stage 1: Health Check (PULSE Check) – Baseline Assessment

This stage initially gathers essential data about each asset, including asset category, location, occupation, service use, legal tenure, leasehold information, statutory compliance, property condition and maintenance backlog, energy performance and carbon impact, and financial performance, including running costs and income if applicable. The aim is to create a complete baseline profile using property questionnaires, data systems and service inputs.

Each asset is then assessed using the Council’s **PULSES** health check, as shown in [Appendix 2](#), which scores performance across six criteria:



**Purpose, Utilisation, Location, Sustainability, Economic viability, and Statutory Compliance**

<b>Health Check</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>UTILISATION</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>ECONOMIC</b>	<b>STATUTORY</b>
<b>Operational: Direct Service Asset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset align with the Council's strategic objectives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset fully utilised and adaptable to future needs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset in the right place for service delivery and accessibility?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset meet environmental and statutory requirements?</li> <li>Can improvements be made to be more energy efficient or carbon neutral?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are running costs and maintenance costs justifiable for service outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset meet health, safety, and legal obligations to enable operational use?</li> </ul>
<b>Operational: Indirect Service Asset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset align with the Council's strategic objectives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the third party effectively using the asset?</li> <li>Could usage be increased based on different lease structures or partnerships?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset in a suitable location for its intended, fully utilised, and adaptable to future needs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset being maintained to meet environmental standards?</li> <li>Does the leaseholder have responsibility for sustainable improvements?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the lease generate appropriate financial or social returns?</li> <li>Are operational costs justifiable?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the leaseholder meeting all required health and safety and legal obligations?</li> </ul>
<b>Non-Operational: Commercial (non-investment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset contribute to economic growth, regeneration, or local business development?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset fully leased and generating sustainable income, or underused?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset in a prime location for commercial viability and future investment?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset meet energy efficiency standards, and is it environmentally sustainable?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset generate sufficient revenue to cover costs and contribute to the Council's financial strategy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset comply with health, safety, and accessibility regulations?</li> </ul>
<b>Non-Operational: Community Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset provide significant social, cultural, or community benefit?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset actively used by the community, or is there low demand?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset accessible and well-situated to meet community needs?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset being maintained effectively and capable of long-term sustainability?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the asset financially sustainable or requires ongoing Council subsidy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the asset meet all legal, lease, and safety requirements?</li> </ul>

The PULSES score provides an indicative assessment of asset performance, guiding decision pathways such as retention, repurposing, disposal, or acquisition. Scores are recorded as percentages to indicate performance and identify underperforming or at-risk assets. Scores are indicative and used to guide, not dictate decisions.

## PULSES Score Range Indicative Interpretation

Baseline Score	Baseline Indicative Interpretation
80–100%	Strong candidate for retention or investment.
60–79%	Generally sound, but may require some improvements.
40–59%	Underperforming and requires further analysis– possible repurposing or rationalisation.
Below 40%	Likely candidate for repurposing or disposal.

### Stage 2: Performance Measures

At this stage, performance is examined in more detail, triangulating PULSES scoring with key performance measures to provide a comprehensive analysis of financial, operational, and strategic viability. These measures help identify operational risks, inefficiencies or service delivery gaps that may not be evident from scoring alone. It also supports prioritisation for appraisal in the next stage.

Performance Indicators for Operational: Direct Service Assets	Performance Indicators for Operational: Indirect Service Assets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running costs per square metre and condition and suitability data.</li> <li>• Utilisation rates and service user data.</li> <li>• Maintenance backlog and future investment needs.</li> <li>• Contribution to Council service priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract performance and cost-effectiveness vs in-house provision.</li> <li>• Tenant compliance with lease obligations.</li> <li>• Social and economic impact of third-party service delivery.</li> <li>• Future opportunities for partnership or co-location.</li> </ul>
Performance Indicators for Non-Operational: Commercial (Non-Investment)	Performance Indicators for Non-Operational: Community Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupancy Rates – percentage of leased space and long-term stability of tenants.</li> <li>• Rental income vs market benchmarks.</li> <li>• Contribution to local economic growth.</li> <li>• Maintenance and Investment needs – costs for repairs and upgrades.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community usage –frequency and level of public engagement.</li> <li>• Social Value contribution – measurable impact on local communities.</li> <li>• Financial sustainability – level of Council subsidy vs. external funding.</li> <li>• Building condition and compliance – Suitability for continued community use.</li> </ul>

As shown in [Appendix 3](#), we will highlight performance measures and outline opportunities and risks to identify any known restrictions, delays, or blockers that may hinder the exploitation of these opportunities, as well as the risks that must be overcome.

### Stage 3: Options Appraisal

Assets flagged through Stages 1 and 2 progress to an options appraisal. This involved assessing capital and revenue costs of continued use, costs and benefits of planned investment, suitability for alternative service or community use, legal and planning constraints, market value or redevelopment potential, risk to service delivery or compliance, and alignment with transformation or carbon reduction objectives.

We will outline the opportunities and risks to identify any known restrictions, delays, or blockers to exploiting these opportunities, as well as the risks that must be overcome.

Different asset categories will determine different challenges and decision pathways to ensure that both commercial and community facilities are managed to maximise financial returns, social value, and strategic benefits.

Decision Pathway	Retain	Repurpose	Disposal	Acquisition
<b>Operational: Direct Service Asset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could it be improved through efficiency measures, shared use or technology?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the asset be adapted to support other Council services or alternative public users?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset is no longer required and has limited alternative use, disposal or redevelopment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a new asset is required to meet service needs or replace an inefficient asset.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational: Indirect Service Asset</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the tenant performs well, continue monitoring and retaining the lease.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could the asset be repurposed for a different service, a new lease arrangement or community use?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If underperforming and cannot be repurposed, consider lease termination, sale or transfer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If investment in a new leasehold asset would enhance service delivery that cannot be delivered in-house.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-Operational: Commercial (non-Investment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset generates sustainable income and aligns with economic growth or regeneration priorities, it will be retained and actively managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If market conditions have changed, the asset may be repurposed for an alternative commercial use or redevelopment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset is financially unviable, has declining value, or no longer aligns with strategic objectives, it will be considered for disposal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition opportunities will be assessed if new assets could enhance business growth, regeneration, or strategic initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-Operational: Community Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset provides substantial community benefits and remains financially viable, it will be retained with ongoing support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset is underutilised but could serve another community function, options for repurposing will be explored.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the asset is no longer required or sustainable, community asset transfer or disposal options will be explored.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a community-driven need arises, the Council may explore acquisitions or partnerships to support local facilities.</li> </ul>

## Stage 4 – Recommendations

A recommendation is made for each appraised asset, based on the outcome of the preceding stages:

Decision Pathway	Recommendation
<b>Retain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing Use and no investment required.</li> <li>• Existing Use and investment required.</li> </ul>
<b>Repurpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repurpose: no investment required.</li> <li>• Repurpose: investment required.</li> <li>• Opportunity: collaboration, partnership, repurpose, income generation</li> </ul>
<b>Disposal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Market.</li> <li>• Partner Organisation</li> <li>• Community Asset Transfer</li> </ul>
<b>Acquisition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational requirement.</li> <li>• Investment requirement.</li> <li>• Regeneration requirement.</li> </ul>

Recommendations are recorded and used to inform governance discussions via the Asset Working Group, Placemaking Board, CMT, or cabinet, depending on scope and value.

## Stage 5 – Action Plan and Implementation

Final decisions are documented in the **SAMP Action Plan**, which includes:

- Agreed outcome
- Responsible officer or team
- Timeline and dependencies
- Required resources or funding
- Reporting and review milestones

Actions are coordinated through the Corporate Landlord team, with input from Facilities Management, Legal, Finance and affected services. Progress is monitored through quarterly reviews and reported annually as part of SAMP oversight.

## Investment Assets

Investment assets are those held by the Council solely to generate financial returns through rental income or capital appreciation. Unlike non-investment commercial properties, these assets have no intended wider community, social, or economic role beyond revenue generation. The Council actively manages its investment portfolio to ensure it remains financially viable, commercially competitive, and aligned with strategic financial goals.

To assess investment assets effectively, we have set an Investment Scoring Matrix in [2](#), ensuring that all assets are benchmarked against key financial and risk criteria. This matrix provides a transparent, evidence-based approach to decision-making, ensuring that the portfolio remains profitable and sustainable and sets the essential criteria for retaining and acquiring investments.

To maximise income and returns, the investment income portfolio will be reviewed periodically, at least once a year, and opportunities to increase revenue through re-gearing, rent reviews, and lease renewal will be pursued. This will ensure that only investments with good performance are retained, and that action is taken to improve non-performing investments by re-gearing, repurposing, or disposing of them.

Investment assets are scored based on several criteria: Location, Rental and Capital Growth, Tenant Strength, Tenure, Lease Length, Repair Liability, and Physical Quality/Sustainability. Each asset is scored out of 35, and the total scores inform the decision-making process.

The investment matrix scoring determines an Asset Management Action Plan.

Total Score	Recommendation	Action
30-35: High-Performing Asset	•Retain and Optimise	•The asset is performing well, generating strong returns, and should be actively managed to maximise income.
20-29: Moderate Performing Asset	•Repurpose or regear	•The asset is viable but could be improved through lease restructuring and refurbishment. Further review is required.
Below 20: Underperforming Asset	•Disposal or exit strategy	•The asset fails to generate adequate returns, has declining value, or carries excessive risk. Consider disposal, reinvestment or redevelopment.

# Asset Management Action Plan

The Asset Management Action Plan is an active document that outlines the specific actions, timelines, and resources necessary to achieve the strategic objectives of the Asset Management Strategy. The plan is updated annually to reflect changes in priorities, ensuring that it remains responsive to evolving service and financial demands. This action plan will also be used to develop a future Strategic Asset Management Plan for 2030.

## Action Plan for 2025-2028

The priorities are to develop a strategic framework that supports both operational and non-operational management activities and to implement a Corporate Landlord Model.

An implementation plan will highlight resource changes as rules, behaviours, and culture changes are introduced in the Policy. This will provide clarity of purpose and consistency of focus for work.

The Asset Working Group's activities will be informed and determined by the Placemaking Board and Corporate Management Team.

An overall summary of the Action Plan is set out below.

Element	Actions
<b>Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the SAMP</li> <li>• Supplemental strategies: Corporate Planned Maintenance, Asset Management Framework, Building Managers Framework, Corporate Landlord implementation plan, Acquisition and Disposal.</li> <li>• Standardise asset management processes and documentation.</li> </ul>
<b>ICT Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable ICT system to hold asset data and case management</li> </ul>
<b>Policy/Operational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Challenge Programme</li> <li>• Organisational changes to the Corporate Landlord Model</li> <li>• Develop Operational Models/standards</li> <li>• Develop Repairs and Maintenance Prioritisation</li> <li>• Develop Performance standards and reporting</li> <li>• Develop benchmarking performance</li> <li>• Centralisation of budgets</li> </ul>



# Appendix

## Appendix 1: SAMP alignment with Corporate Strategy

The table below details how our assets align with the corporate objectives outlined in the **Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024** and how they will be measured in terms of performance.

Council Objective	Asset Examples
<p><b>Providing the best start in life to achieve big ambitions</b> The asset should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support services/ initiatives for children, families, and young people</li> <li>• Promote inclusivity, prevent poverty, and enhance well-being.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Maintained Schools</b> Supports the education and development of children</p> <p><b>Children’s Centres</b> Provides early childhood services and family support</p> <p><b>Children’s Residential</b> Offers care and housing for vulnerable children</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Suitability and sufficiency • Operational costs • Future maintenance liabilities</p>	
<p><b>Healthy and Resilient Communities</b> The asset should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to health, safety, and well-being.</li> <li>• Support active lifestyles, community engagement, and social connections.</li> <li>• Support active lifestyles, community engagement, and social connections. Programme</li> <li>• Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025-2028</li> </ul>	<p><b>Libraries</b> Facilitates community engagement, education, and social connections</p> <p><b>Sports and Leisure</b> Promotes physical activity and well-being</p> <p><b>Changing Rooms and Pavilions</b> Supports community sports and active lifestyles</p> <p><b>Older Persons Support Centre</b> Provides care and enhances the well-being of older residents</p> <p><b>Day Centre</b> Offers services to promote social connections and well-being.</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Suitability and sufficiency • Operational costs • Future maintenance liabilities</p>	
<p><b>A Great Place to Live, Work and Visit</b> • Contribute to health, safety, and well-being. • Support active lifestyles, community engagement, and social connections. • Provide an environment that is well looked after.</p>	<p><b>Community Facilities</b> Facilitates local events and activities, boosting community engagement</p> <p><b>Town Centre Regeneration</b> - Enhance the vitality of the town centres, promoting economic growth and local pride</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Operational costs to the Council • Future maintenance liabilities • Community benefit • Suitability and sufficiency • Increase footfall/perception. • Operational costs</p>	
<p><b>An Inclusive Economy</b> The asset should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support economic growth, skill development, and local business. • Deliver economic opportunities to all residents.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Car Parks</b> Supports local commerce by providing parking for businesses and visitors</p> <p><b>Business Starter Units</b> Provides space for new businesses, aiding economic growth and job creation</p> <p><b>Offices</b> -Supports efficient service delivery and resource management.</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Suitability and sufficiency • Occupancy rates, income generated. • Operational costs • Future maintenance liabilities • Jobs created • New business and follow-on created • Business Survival</p>	
<p><b>A Sustainable Council</b> The asset should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide value for money and support financial sustainability.</li> <li>• Ensure value for money, continually exploring ways to optimise our use of resources, reduce costs, and deliver high-quality services</li> </ul>	<p><b>Depots</b> Enhances operational efficiency and contributes to financial sustainability.</p> <p><b>Investment portfolio</b> Generates revenue to support financial sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Suitability and sufficiency • Operational costs • Future maintenance liabilities • Rental income • Void rate • Return on Investment</p>	

The table below outlines how our assets align with the corporate objectives outlined in the **Medium-Term Financial Plan** and how they will be measured in terms of performance.

Council Objective	Asset category
<p><b>Optimise Asset Utilisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure properties are used efficiently to minimise operating costs.</li> <li>• Reduce redundant or underused spaces through rationalisation.</li> </ul>	Operational properties
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Improved utilisation rates of operational buildings. • Reduction in overall property footprint.</p>	
<p><b>Support Economic Regeneration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release land to stimulate housing and commercial development.</li> <li>• Support town centre revitalisation through the strategic use of properties.</li> </ul>	Surplus, Town Centre assets and employment land
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Volume of surplus land repurposed or sold for development. • Number of regeneration projects delivered</p>	
<p><b>Ensure Financial Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise income through lease agreements or sales of underperforming assets.</li> <li>• Prioritise investments in assets with strong financial returns.</li> </ul>	Investment and non-operational commercial
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Increased annual revenue from income-generating properties. • Evidence of return on investment from prioritised assets.</p>	
<p><b>Deliver Sustainable and Green Initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver environmentally sustainable initiatives whilst maximising benefits.</li> <li>• Ensure all assets perform to the highest standards to maximise efficiency, reduce emissions and costs.</li> <li>• Utilise our assets to protect, extend and connect areas of natural habitat to help address the decline in native species and improve biodiversity.</li> </ul>	Operational properties and land
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Reduce consumption. • Generated and stored/exported energy. • Increased biodiversity value.</p>	
<p><b>Strengthen Community Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-locate services to improve accessibility and service delivery.</li> <li>• Support shared-use agreements with partners to maximise value from assets</li> </ul>	Non-operational: community facilities
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Resident satisfaction with community facilities. • Number of shared-use agreements in place</p>	
<p><b>Support Strategic Decision-Making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Asset Challenge framework to review asset performance and alignment.</li> <li>• Ensure accurate data supports evidence-based decisions.</li> </ul>	All land and buildings
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • The proportion of assets is reviewed under the Asset Challenge process. • Completeness and accuracy of asset data records</p>	

The table below details how our assets align with the corporate objectives outlined in the **Powering our Future programme** and how they will be measured in terms of performance.

Council Objective	Asset category
<p><b>Regeneration and Place-Making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use surplus land to deliver housing, commercial, and mixed-use developments.</li> <li>• Support town centre revitalisation through strategic property redevelopment.</li> <li>• Attract investment by offering development-ready sites to the private sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Surplus, Town Centre assets and employment land</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Amount of surplus land repurposed for regeneration. • Number of regeneration projects completed. • Evidence of private investment generated through Council-owned assets.</p>	
<p><b>Community and Partnership Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-locate services to improve accessibility and enhance community well-being.</li> <li>• Provide spaces for public and private sector partnerships to deliver services.</li> <li>• Engage with communities to ensure assets align with local needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Non-operational: community facilities</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Feedback from residents on satisfaction with community facilities. • Increase in shared-use agreements and partnership projects. • Level of community participation in asset-related projects.</p>	
<p><b>Financial Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise rental income through effective management of commercial properties.</li> <li>• Dispose of underperforming assets to reduce costs and generate capital receipts.</li> <li>• Prioritise investments in high-performing and cost-efficient assets.</li> </ul>	<p>Investment and non-operational commercial</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Increase annual revenue from Council-owned properties. • Capital raised through asset disposals. • Evidence of cost savings and returns on investments.</p>	
<p><b>Sustainability and Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise the energy efficiency of operational assets to reduce costs and emissions.</li> <li>• Install renewable energy generation and storage solutions such as solar panels, battery storage and heat pumps,</li> <li>• Repurpose underutilised land for green infrastructure and biodiversity projects.</li> </ul>	<p>Operational properties and land</p>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions. • Number of properties equipped with renewable energy systems. • Area of land converted for biodiversity enhancement.</p>	

The table below outlines how our assets align with the **Inclusive Growth Strategy 2025–2028** corporate objectives and how they will be measured in terms of performance.

Council Objective	Asset category
<p><b>Support Economic Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release surplus land for housing and business developments to stimulate local growth.</li> <li>• Use assets to attract and retain businesses</li> </ul>	Surplus, non-operational commercial assets
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Volume of land allocated for economic development projects. • Increase in tenancy rates and business occupancy levels.</p>	
<p><b>Encourage Job Creation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide affordable workspaces for start-ups and small enterprises.</li> <li>• Partner with local organisations to create job opportunities through regeneration projects.</li> </ul>	Non-operational commercial (e.g. Industrial and Business Units)
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Number of new businesses supported through council-owned properties. • Number of jobs created through asset-enabled initiatives.</p>	
<p><b>Deliver Town Centre Revitalisation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repurpose vacant town centre Council assets to support retail, housing, or community uses.</li> <li>• Create mixed-use developments to enhance town centre vibrancy</li> </ul>	Surplus, Town Centre assets
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Reduction in the number of vacant town centre properties. • Increase in footfall and community engagement in revitalised areas</p>	
<p><b>Support Social Inclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop co-located services to improve access for vulnerable and underserved groups.</li> <li>• Use public spaces for programmes supporting social mobility and community resilience.</li> </ul>	Non-operational: community facilities
<p><b>Performance Measures</b> • Resident satisfaction with access to local services. • Participation levels in inclusive community initiatives.</p>	
<p><b>Foster Education and Skills Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide spaces for training programmes and skill-building initiatives.</li> <li>• Partner with local education providers to maximise the use of council-owned assets.</li> </ul>	Operational: Direct (e.g. educational and training facilities)
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Number of training programmes hosted in Council facilities. • Increase in skills training opportunities delivered through partnerships.</p>	

The table below outlines how our assets align with the corporate objectives outlined in the **Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022–2032**, and how they will be measured in terms of performance.

Council Objective	Asset category
<p><b>Achieve Carbon Neutrality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure assets are equipped with energy-efficient systems to reduce consumption and emissions.</li> <li>• Transition heating systems to low-carbon alternatives like heat pumps.</li> </ul>	Operational properties
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> • Progress towards net-zero targets.</p>	
<p><b>Increase Renewable Energy Use on Council Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install renewable energy generation and storage solutions.</li> <li>• Utilise suitable surplus land for renewable energy projects.</li> </ul>	Operational properties and land
<p><b>Performance Measures</b> • Measure of energy generated and stored. • Number of renewable energy installations.</p>	
<p><b>Enhance Biodiversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform surplus land into green spaces, wildlife habitats, and community gardens.</li> <li>• Increase tree and hedge planting whilst developing green corridors to support habitats.</li> </ul>	Surplus, Operational (e.g. underutilised land and green spaces)
<p><b>Performance Measures</b> • Area of land converted for biodiversity enhancement. • Measure of biodiversity uplift.</p>	
<p><b>Improve Resource Efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct energy audits to identify and address inefficiencies.</li> <li>• Implement smart systems for energy and water usage monitoring and optimisation.</li> </ul>	Operational properties
<p><b>Performance Measures</b> • Evidence of operational improvements in energy and water efficiency. • Reduction in overall energy and water usage</p>	
<p><b>Promote Climate Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance drainage systems and develop sustainable urban drainage solutions (SuDS).</li> <li>• Use land assets to create flood management zones, such as increasing tree and hedge planting to manage flash flooding and soil erosion.</li> </ul>	Operational properties and land (e.g. flood-prone land and buildings)
<p><b>Performance Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of assets contributing to flood mitigation and resilience. • Increase in tree/hedge planting</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Engage Communities in Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use council facilities to host workshops and events promoting sustainable practices.</li> <li>• Provide education resources on climate change and environmental stewardship</li> </ul>	Operational properties and non-operational: community facilities
<p><b>Performance Measures</b> • Participation rates in sustainability-focused community programmes. • Resident feedback on educational outreach initiatives.</p>	

## Appendix 2: PULSES Scoring Matrix

	SCORE: 0	SCORE: 3	SCORE: 5	WEIGHTING	
PURPOSE	<b>No Alignment:</b> The asset does not contribute to the Council's objective.	<b>Moderate Alignment:</b> The asset contributes to the Council's objective but could be improved.	<b>Excellent Alignment:</b> The asset fully supports and embodies the Council's objective.	30%	
UTILISATION	<b>Not Utilised and Inflexible:</b> The asset is mainly unused, with a rigid configuration and limited adaptability.	<b>Moderate Utilisation and Some Flexibility:</b> The asset is moderately utilised and somewhat flexible, with potential for adjustments.	<b>Fully Utilised and Highly Flexible:</b> The asset is fully utilised and adaptable to various needs.	25%	
LOCATION	<b>Does Not Meet Service Needs:</b> The location is unsuitable, with poor accessibility preventing it from serving any useful purpose.	<b>Adequately Meets Service Needs:</b> The location is satisfactory, meeting basic service requirements and accessibility standards, but there is room for improvement.	<b>Fully Meets Service Needs:</b> The location is ideal, perfectly aligned with service needs, fully accessible, and maximises the asset's effectiveness.	10%	
SUSTAINABILITY	<b>Fails to Meet Requirements:</b> The asset does not meet statutory requirements and has no potential for operational carbon neutrality or biodiversity uplift.	<b>Meets Requirements with Potential:</b> The asset meets statutory requirements and has potential for operational carbon neutrality or biodiversity uplift.	<b>Exceeds Requirements and Highly Sustainable:</b> The asset exceeds statutory requirements and is on track for operational carbon neutrality or biodiversity uplift.	10%	
ECONOMIC	<b>High Costs:</b> The asset has high running costs.	<b>Above Average Costs:</b> The asset has above-average running costs.	<b>Low Costs:</b> The asset has low or below-average running costs.	25%	
TOTAL SCORE				%	
STATUTORY COMPLIANCE	<b>FAIL:</b> The asset does not meet the statutory requirement.		<b>PASS:</b> Asset meets statutory compliance requirements.		PASS/FAIL

## Appendix 3: Worked Asset Challenge Example

### Asset Challenge Scoring

ASSET	ASSET CHALLENGE					
	PURPOSE	UTILISATION	LOCATION	SUSTAINABILITY	ECONOMIC	SCORE
Example	<b>No Alignment:</b> The asset does not contribute to the Council's objective.	<b>Moderate Utilisation and Some Flexibility:</b> The asset is moderately utilised and somewhat flexible, with the potential for adjustments.	<b>Fully Meets Service Needs:</b> The location is ideal, perfectly aligned with service needs, fully accessible, and maximises the asset's effectiveness.	<b>Fails to Meet Requirements:</b> The asset does not meet statutory requirements and has no potential for carbon neutrality.	<b>Low Costs:</b> The asset has low or below-average running costs.	40%

<b>STATUTORY COMPLIANCE</b>	<b>FAIL:</b> The asset does not meet the statutory requirement.	<b>PASS:</b> Asset meets statutory compliance requirements.	<b>PASS</b>
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### Economic Performance:

ASSET	ECONOMIC					
	Running Costs		Condition Costs			
SIZE	Operational costs 24/25	Operational costs 24/25	Essential costs within 2 years	Essential costs within 2 years	Overall costs to 5 years	Overall costs to 5 years
m2	£	£ m2	£	£m2	£	£m2

### Opportunities:

OPPORTUNITY						RECOMMEND: Retain Review Disinvest Disposal Acquisition
Market Value	Sensitivity On Disposal	Collaboration	Partnership	Repurpose	Regeneration	

## Appendix 4: Investment Portfolio Scoring Matrix

Investment Class <i>i.e. Ground Lease /Estate Shop</i>	Score (1-5)
Investment Criteria	
Location	5
Rental and Capital Growth	3
Tenancy Strength	2
Tenure	2
Tenant Lease Length	2
Repairing liability	3
Physical quality/MEES	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20 / 35</b>

### Key

Investment Criteria	Excellent: 5	Good: 4	Acceptable: 3	Marginal: 2	Unacceptable: 1
<b>Location</b>	Prime	Prime/Secondary	Secondary	Secondary/Tertiary	Tertiary
<b>Rental and Capital Growth</b>	Ground lease; Rent Reviews annual greater/RPI	Rent Reviews every 3-5 years, greater Market Rent/RPI	Rent Reviews every 3-5 years Market Rent	Rent Reviews every 5+ years Market Rent	No Rent Reviews. Limited capital growth
<b>Tenancy Strength</b>	Strong covenant strength: single tenant	Good covenant strength: single tenant	Strong covenant strength: multiple tenants	Good covenant strength: multiple tenants	Poor financial covenant strength
<b>Tenure</b>	Freehold	Lease 150+ years	Lease 75+ 150 years	Lease 25+ 75 years	Lease for less than 25 years
<b>Tenant Lease Length</b>	>15 years	10-15 years	5-9 years	2-5 years	<2 years or vacant
<b>Repairing liability*</b>	Full repairing and insuring.	Internal repairing. External is fully recoverable.	Internal repairing. Landlord's main structure.	Internal repairing. Landlord's main structure and service media	Landlord
<b>Physical quality/MEES</b>	Newly built; Ground lease; EPC A/B	Recently refurbished; EPC A/B	Average condition, remaining physical life over 25 years; EPC A/B	Old property with redevelopment potential; EPC C-E	Close to the end of physical life; EPC F/G

## Appendix 5: Property Asset Table

Type	Operational Direct Service	Operational In-Direct Service	Non-Op Community	Non-Op Commercial	Investment	Assets Held for Sale	Surplus	Non-Op Residential
Administration Building	5					1	8	
Cemetery	4							
Changing Facility	4							
Childrens Centre	1	1	1					
Childrens homes	8	3						
Community Centre			19			1		
Crematorium	1							
Day Centre	3	1						
Depot	5							
Family Hub	4							
Garages							1	
Hotel					1			
Industrial units	6			37		1		
Leisure Centres		6						
Library	6		1					
Misc	2		1		1		1	
Museum	1							
Nursery				4				
Office	2		4	3			1	
Pavilions & Café	2		9					
Primary Schools	12							
Public Toilets	4							
Registrar	1							
Residential		1						20
Residential Home	2						1	
Resource Centre	2							
Retail	1	1	3	3	13	8	2	
Scout & Guide Hut				1				
Secondary School	1							
Shopping Centre				1				
Special Education		1			1			
Supported Accommodation	7							
Theatres			1	1				
Travellers Site								1
Visitors Centre				2				
<b>Total</b>	84	14	39	52	16	11	14	21
	<b>251</b>							

## Abbreviations

- AMS - The Asset Management Strategy
- AWG – Asset Working Group
- MTFP - The Medium-Term Financial Plan
- POF - Power of Future
- SAMP – Strategic Asset Management Plan

REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM

## CABINET DECISION

Deputy Leader of the Council and Member for Resources and Transport – Lead Cabinet  
Member – Councillor Paul Rowling

# Pride in Place – Central Stockton and Portrack - update

## Summary

In the summer of 2025 Central Stockton and Portrack was announced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as one of 284 communities across the country to be part of the Pride in Place (PiP) Programme. This report updates Cabinet on the work undertaken to date and details the next stages of the development of the programme.

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

The Pride in Place Programme is a 'hyper local' community-led government funding programme. The ethos of PiP aligns with The Stockton-on-Tees Plan and Powering Our Future programme by placing residents at the heart of the work we do, by bringing people together to build stronger, more resilient communities and to create thriving places. Cabinet are asked to note the proposed next steps to enable the council to comply with MHCLG Programme timelines.

## Recommendations

1. This report is for information only. Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report, including the progress towards appointment of a chair of the neighbourhood board and the timetable outlined in paragraph 6 (and in **Appendix 1**).

## Detail

1. PiP is a new Govt funding programme aimed at putting power into the hands of local people to shape their communities. Central Stockton and Portrack is one of 284 PiP neighbourhoods across the country. The Programme will provide access to £19.6M (over 10 years) to spend on projects that will make a real difference to local people and the neighbourhood. The programme is intended to be flexible, supportive, community led and have a focus on long-term sustainability.
2. A requirement of PiP funding is the need to establish a Neighbourhood Board which will be responsible for producing a 10-year vision for their place, supported by interventions which are set out in a Regeneration Plan. The Council are the accountable body for the programme. To achieve the strategic objectives of the programme, the Board will need to consider the 3 overarching PiP aims:
  - Stronger communities
  - Thriving communities
  - Communities taking back control

3. MHCLG guidance stipulates the need for the programme to be driven by the Board and that the Board must be drawn from those who predominantly live and work in the neighbourhood and should also include the local ward councillors and MP.
4. An initial step for the programme was to appoint a Chair of the Board, through an open and competitive process. This opportunity was advertised through the Council's social media channels and partnership networks and newsletters throughout March 2026. The selection process, carried out by the Council and Chris McDonald MP is now almost complete and will be shared on the PiP pages of the Council website and through the Council's communication channels shortly. The Chair, supported by the Council will then be responsible for appointing and convening the remaining board members by the end of July 2026. The programme allows for board members to claim reasonable expenses, to ensure that all members of the community can become board members and have access to attend meetings.
5. Ipsos have been commissioned by MHCLG to pilot a range of consultation techniques. Working with 20 local authorities with PiP neighbourhoods this will form part of a PiP Local Authority good practice engagement toolkit. SBC is one of these authorities. Working with Ipsos, we launched our PiP consultation with sessions with year 5 primary school pupils within the Central Stockton and Portrack neighbourhood. We heard enthusiastically about what these young people love about living in Stockton and what they want their local area to look like in 10 years' time.
6. To ensure we adhere to critical MHCLG submission deadlines a programme of next steps and deadlines has been developed and is included at **Appendix 1**. This programme sets out the plan for engagement and board recruitment over the spring, and the MHCLG deadlines in July for submission of the details of all board members and November for submission of the Neighbourhood's 4-year Investment Plan and 10-year Regeneration Plan.
7. Members are asked to note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet before the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2026 MHCLG deadline; updating Cabinet on the key themes identified following the conclusion of this consultation and engagement phase, how these key themes have shaped the development of proposed priorities and to seek approval for the draft 4-year Investment Plan and 10-Year Regeneration Plan. This report will also provide further detail and seek agreement on the role of the Council as accountable body and secretariate and provide detail on the proposed programme and governance support requirements.

### Consultation and engagement and next steps

8. As noted above a key focus for the programme over the next few months is to undertake an extensive community engagement and consultation programme, to understand what is important to the people who live and work in the neighbourhood. A programme has been designed which builds on the existing relationships with stakeholders and partners. We know that residents have already shared their views on issues such as, the use and development of Tilery park, crime and antisocial behaviour in the town centre and the Stockton and North Thornaby Blueprint. These previous engagement exercises are being used as the foundation for the next stages of consultation, building on what our communities have already shared with us.
9. Since January of this year work has been ongoing to raise awareness of the programme amongst the public, business and community sector partners. These groups have helped to raise awareness of the programme and helped to share information about the recruitment of the board chair.
10. It is important that we hear the views and priorities of all sectors of the community, including businesses, young people, minority ethnic populations, and communities of interest and those that do not normally engage with public consultation. The programme is designed to include a range of consultation techniques, and be delivered collaboratively with community partners. Two-way communication is critical throughout the programme, this will involve a 'listen and check back-in' approach, as well as consultation networks which will contribute to shaping the work programmes

for each of the priority areas identified. The engagement programme and results will form part of the submission to MHCLG

11. As the programme develops links will be created with the work of wider SBC projects (such as the Neighbourhood Health Pilot for example) and our partners. Feedback from all consultees will be shared to ensure that the voice of residents, businesses and customers is used to shape future service design, avoid duplication and priorities issues that are important to our residents

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<b>PIP Programme Timeline &amp; an overview of proposed programme activity</b>	
Timeline	Activity
Early 2026	<p>MHCLG issued <b>2025 -2026 capacity funding (£150,000)</b>:</p> <p>To support local community engagement and the establishment of Neighbourhood Boards.</p>
April 2026 – July 2026	<p>We received the first phase of delivery funding. This marked the commencement of the delivery phase of the programme: This initial funding can be used for community engagement and establishing the board</p> <p><i>2026/27 Revenue funding:</i> is split in 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment 1 at the beginning the 2026/27 financial year</li> <li>• Payment 2 released on approval of the Pride in Place Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Develop the board governance policies and terms of reference.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Board Chair, recruit to the remaining board positions: Some may be identified through the community engagement, the chair’s recruitment and partner organisations.</p> <p>Continue a programme of community and partner engagement, to continue to shape the vision and the investment plan.</p> <p>Agree board governance documents and processes ensure consistency and compliance with SBC corporate governance, the MHCLG guidance and in agreement with the Board Chair.</p> <p>Submit finalised Neighbourhood Board membership (including chair) and any proposals to alter the ‘default’ boundary to MHCLG</p>
Autumn 2026	<p>MHCLG to review Board membership and boundary proposals and confirm if acceptable.</p> <p>Work with the board to agree priorities for the programme and develop the plans for investment.</p>
By 28.11.26	<p>Neighbourhood Board must submit its Regeneration Plan for assessment and approval. It must include: a 10-year vision and an initial 4-year investment plan.</p>
Spring 2027	<p>MHCLG approves Regeneration Plan.</p>

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REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM

## KEY DECISION

Resources and Transport - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling  
Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Clare Besford

# Post-16 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transport: Approval to Launch a Formal Public Statutory Consultation on Potential Changes to Discretionary Transport Support

### Summary

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) currently provides discretionary post-16 SEND transport to approximately 175 learners, which includes 40 learners aged 19+. The estimated cost of this service for 2025/26 is circa £400,000 in direct external expenditure, with additional internal staffing and vehicle costs of around £300,000, giving an indicative total of £700,000.

Demand and associated costs for community transport services continue to increase and, without change, would place significant and growing pressure on the Council's budget over the medium term. Continuing the current approach without change is unlikely to be financially

sustainable over the medium term. However, no decision has been made as to how the policy should change.

No policy change is proposed at this stage. Cabinet is asked only to approve a formal public statutory consultation, with a further report to return after consultation setting out findings, mitigations and a recommended policy position for decision.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek views on a range of potential approaches and the appropriate balance between financial sustainability, accessibility and support for learners.

Any changes arising from consultation would be implemented in line with statutory requirements, including the annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement and associated notice periods.

National government launched a new schools white paper and SEND reform white paper in February 2026, which are currently in a consultation period closing on 18 May 2026. The proposed reforms detail a ten-year transformation of the SEND and Alternative Provision system which has a clear vision of an inclusion-led, sustainable school system. Schools and local authorities must prioritise early intervention through clear local pathways of support, jointly commissioned with health services.

Local Area Partnership Boards for SEND, led by local authorities, have to complete a Local Area Reform Plan by June 2026, which details local plans to increase mainstream inclusion and decrease deficits on high needs funding, through planned incentives and capital investment.

Within this, there is recognition of rising home to school transport costs linked to SEND placements. Local authorities are expected to review this spend and use analysis of this to inform their Local Area Reform Plan, ensuring a move towards less reliance on home to school transport. The reforms reinforce a clear expectation that local authorities strengthen local provision, reduce reliance on out-of-area placements, and support young people to be educated within their communities, naturally linking to more sustainable transport arrangements.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)**

1. Post-16 SEND transport is a discretionary and non-statutory provision, whereas demand for statutory SEND transport (for those of compulsory school age) is fixed. Adjustments to the post-16 offer represent one of the principal options available to the Council to respond to rising cost and demand pressures, alongside other measures. Without intervention, the overall Community Transport expenditure has increased from £4.9m in 2022-23 to a forecast of £7.75m in 2025-26. This represents an increase of 58% within 3 years. This is projected to exceed £10.6m 2028/29, with post-16 costs rising year-on-year. Without intervention, these pressures will reduce the Council's ability to respond to other service demands.
2. Benchmarking indicates many councils have already revised post-16 SEND transport, typically with mitigations such as charging, phasing, Independent Travel Training (ITT), personal travel budgets and exceptional circumstances governance.

3. Any future proposal must be lawful, transparent and evidence-led, following genuine consultation and a full Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA).
4. While financial sustainability is a key consideration, the Council has not reached any concluded view on the preferred approach. The consultation will inform the development of any future proposals.

## Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the launch of a formal public statutory consultation (of a minimum of 28 working days during term-time) on potential changes to the discretionary post-16 SEND transport offer.
2. Agree that consultation materials will illustrate a range of potential approaches at a formative stage and without any predetermined outcome, including the option of maintaining the current approach, and including:
  - Introducing parent/carer financial contributions (with reductions/exemptions and hardship routes)
  - Ceasing some or all non-statutory post-16 transport

The consultation will also explore mitigations such as phasing, Independent Travel Training (ITT), personal travel budgets and exceptional circumstances governance, recognising that the effectiveness of such measures will vary depending on individual circumstances and implementation.

3. Delegate authority to the Director(s) responsible for the relevant functions at the time of implementation, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, to finalise consultation documents and approach within the scope of options set out in this report and in line with statutory requirements..
4. Note that a further Cabinet report would return post-consultation, setting out outcomes, impacts, mitigations and a recommended policy position for decision.

## Detail

This report seeks approval to consult on potential changes to SBC's discretionary post-16 SEND transport. Cabinet is not being asked to determine any change in policy at this stage. The issue remains at a formative stage and will have regard to consultation responses before reaching any final decision.

Current discretionary support covers approximately 175 learners, including 40 aged 19+, across 55 routes. 24 of these routes mix post-16 learners with compulsory school-age pupils, so any future change would require careful route redesign to realise savings while protecting statutory duties.

Local authorities must publish a Post-16 Transport Policy Statement annually by 31 May. Distinct duties apply for learners aged 16-18, and continuing to 25, and for adult learners aged 19+ (some instances invoke free of charge transport where it is judged to be necessary). Any

policy change requires a genuine, open consultation. The options presented reflect approaches adopted by other authorities and are intended to provide a realistic range of policy responses.

Early engagement with the Stockton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) has underlined the need for clear timelines, accessible materials, and opportunities to share lived experiences. SPCF also emphasised the need for safe and accessible public transport, clarity on available transport support (e.g. free bus passes/concessions from operators), and recognised that the proposed future expansion of ITT is about promoting independence and long-term outcomes.

The scope of the options presented for consultation cover:

- Introduction of parent/carer contributions, with means-tested reductions/exemptions and hardship routes
- An exceptional circumstance only model, with a cross-service panel established to protect those with the highest needs
- Phased introduction (e.g. existing learners are protected through to course completion, with changes applying to new starters)
- Cessation of some/all non-statutory post-16 transport, paired with mitigations (e.g. ITT, personal travel budgets, and exceptional circumstances governance).

The options presented are intended to support meaningful consultation and are not exhaustive; consultees are invited to comment on these and any alternative approaches.

### **Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment**

A full EPIA has been produced and will be updated with key feedback and intelligence should consultation, and any further decision-making, proceed. The initial EPIA has informed the development of the consultation options by identifying likely impacts on protected characteristic groups, including age (16–18), disability and race. It does not represent a concluded assessment of impacts and will be refined in light of consultation responses and any subsequent proposals. Particular regard will be given to the impact on learners with the highest needs and those from low-income households.

### **Corporate Parenting Implications**

Any future proposals will consider potential impacts on children in our care and care leavers, including placement stability, accessibility and tailored support to sustain education, training and employment.

### **Financial Implications**

Indicative 2025/26 costs for discretionary post-16 SEND transport are estimated circa £700,000 (approximately £400,000 external plus £300,000 internal costs). The MTFP includes saving expectations relating to Community Transport. Detailed modelled would be developed alongside options (including potential phasing and route redesign) and will assess risks such as any potential cost transfer to Adult Social Care if learners disengage from education.

Detailed financial assessment will be undertaken alongside consultation outcomes to ensure that any future proposals are informed by both financial and equality considerations, including potential wider system impacts.

The cost to carry out the consultation will be met from existing budgets, therefore there will be no additional cost to Council budgets in order to implement this.

### **Legal Implications**

Under the Education Act 1996, the Council must publish its Post-16 Transport Policy Statement annually by 31 May and ensure arrangements have regard to learners with SEND. Distinct duties apply for adult learners (19+), in some cases requiring free transport where necessary. Any policy change must follow a genuine consultation of at least 28 working days during term-time.

Any consultation will be undertaken at a formative stage and in a manner that is fair, transparent and enables consultees to provide informed views on the options under consideration.

### **Risk Assessment**

This matter is medium to high risk due to public interest, equality implications and the vulnerability of the cohort. Principal risks include legal challenge, equality impacts, public concern, and wider system effects (e.g. potential Adult Social Care demand). Controls include a robust consultation, a full EPIA, clear and early communication, transitional protections, and strong governance.

### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)**

This is a Borough-wide issue affecting all wards. Appropriate briefings and communications will be undertaken with Members.

### **Background Papers**

EPIA: Post-16 SEND Transport Policy Change.

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## REPORT TO CABINET

23 April 2026

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION

Resources and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Cllr Paul Rowling

# Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) inspection outcome and update

## Summary

This report provides Cabinet with the details and outcome of the latest RIPA inspection undertaken by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO). The Council provided assurance to the IPCO which meant that an onsite inspection was not required and that current arrangements demonstrated a high standard of compliance.

The Council has provided its annual submission for 2025 to the IPCO outlining the occasions it has used the powers. The submission was a nil response for the period 1 January – 31 December 2025.

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

For Members' assurance that RIPA arrangements are being managed appropriately.

## Recommendations

1. Cabinet to note the report.

## Detail

1. Councils are subject to IPCO inspections in relation to their use of RIPA covert surveillance powers. The purpose of these inspections is to ensure that Councils are using powers appropriately, following the correct process for authorisation and have appropriate governance arrangements in place.
2. The Council received notice of an IPCO inspection on 22 April 2025. Officers responded to the IPCO's pre-inspection questions, providing relevant supporting evidence and responses.

3. Following the desktop inspection, it was determined that the Council demonstrated sufficient assurance of ongoing compliance with RIPA, so a full onsite inspection was not deemed necessary.
4. The inspector found that the Council's policies and procedures were comprehensive and in line with legislative developments. The single authorisation which was reviewed was found to be well considered and contributed meaningfully to a specific operation. The inspector made some minor observations relating to the completion of the authorising paperwork which will be considered for any future authorisations.

#### **Annual submission 2025**

5. Every year, the Council must submit details of any covert activities it has carried out that required authorisation under RIPA. The latest submission was provided in January 2026 (covering the period 1 January – 31 December 2025) and was a nil response. The IPCO confirmed it was satisfied with the submission and required no further information from the Council.

#### **Next Steps**

6. The RIPA Steering Group will continue to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for any RIPA activity undertaken by the Council. The next inspection is expected in 2028.
7. An annual update will be provided to Cabinet covering the details of the next IPCO statistical submission.

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**REPORT TO CABINET**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

## **CABINET DECISION**

**Resources and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Paul Rowling**

# **Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited Annual Report**

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on the performance of Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited and enables Cabinet, in its capacity as shareholder, to consider both the financial performance of the companies and the wider economic and regeneration outcomes associated with the Council's investment.

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)**

The Council is the sole shareholder of Stockton Hotels Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited. In addition to financial performance, the Council's investment in the hotel was intended to support wider regeneration, economic activity and inward investment. This report therefore provides an opportunity for Cabinet, as shareholder, to consider the extent to which those objectives continue to be met and to provide strategic direction to the companies.

### **Recommendations**

1. Note the performance of the HotelCo for the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.
2. Agree to appoint Lisa Tague, Strategic Finance Manager, as a council appointed director of both companies.
3. Agree to delegate the appointment of further Council Officers to the board of both companies to the Shareholder Representative in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport.

4. Agree to delegate the appointment of the non-executive director to the board of directors for HotelCo to the Council's Shareholder Representative in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport.

### Detail

1. The Council is the sole shareholder in HoldCo, which in turn wholly owns HotelCo. HotelCo operates the Hampton by Hilton hotel at Northshore under a franchise agreement. The hotel is owned by the Council (subject to a 250 year lease) and operated by Ambridge (formerly Interstate) under a third-party management agreement. As described previously, the primary purpose in establishing the Hotel has always been economic growth and regeneration, anchoring the wider Northshore development, facilitating inward investment, and creating local employment.
2. The original business case for the development of the hotel was not solely financial, but was intended to support the regeneration of Northshore and the wider economic development of the Borough. This included:
  - a. supporting business and industry demand, particularly mid-week accommodation;
  - b. enabling inward investment and supporting major employers;
  - c. contributing to the viability and profile of the Northshore development; and
  - d. generating local employment and supply chain benefits.
3. This report provides an update on the performance of the HotelCo covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, aligning to the latest complete financial year and audit completion. Whilst the hotel continues to deliver a financial return, it is important that its performance is considered in the context of the wider objectives described at paragraph 2.
4. Members will note that work is currently underway to refresh the Council's strategic expectations as shareholder, including through the development of a new Shareholder's Agreement and the intention to introduce a more formal and periodically refreshed business planning framework, including more regular periodic reporting to Cabinet (at least annually).

### Performance Summary

5. Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law).
6. Company law requires that the directors of both companies file the Annual Report and audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2025 with Companies House by 31st December 2025. Following the end of the financial year, the directors engaged a local accountancy firm to undertake the audit of both companies. Following the completion of the audit, both companies filed all required information with companies house on 22nd December 2025.
7. The accounts filed with Companies House have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small company exemption and does not include the Profit and Loss Account.

8. The directors of HotelCo and HoldingCo have provided a full set of financial statements to the shareholder which includes a profit and loss statement for both SBHC and SHC. These are available on the Council's website and were presented to Audit and Governance Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.
9. The board of directors engage an accountancy firm to undertake an audit of the accounts for both companies in line with regulations required by law. Following the independent audit of the financial statements of both companies the audit opinion is that the financial statements
  - give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its profit for the year then ended;
  - have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
  - have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.
10. The financial performance headlines for the 2024/25 financial year are as follows:

Turnover	£3,969,075
Profit after tax	£365,903
Occupancy	77.7%
Average Daily Rate	£97.37

The financial performance of the hotel remains stable and continues to support a dividend return to the Council. However, financial performance represents only one aspect of the Council's interest as shareholder and must be considered alongside the wider economic and regeneration contribution of the asset.

11. On 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the board of directors for HotelCo and HoldCo notified the Council of their intention to release a dividend relating to the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 of £246,823. This dividend was paid to the Council on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026.
12. The Council also receives income from the HotelCo for the following areas:
  - business rates
  - Service Level Agreement for the provision of finance and legal professional services,
  - lease payment (this sum is index lined).
13. As at January 2026, so far this financial year the HotelCo is experiencing similar turnover and occupancy levels, however it is seeing some cost increases across a number of suppliers. The Hotel continues to experience higher occupancy levels mid-week compared to weekends. This is due to high demand for business related stays during the working week. One off larger scale events continue to have an impact upon demand. Events held

during this year include Billingham Folklore Festival and Stockton International Riverside Festival. The Hilton Quality Audit score is at outstanding.

14. The HotelCo is within a comparator set of local hotels of similar size and properties. The HotelCo continues to outperform the market and comparator set achieving 1 out of 5 in the average daily rate and revenue generation index.
15. This year the hotel has experienced challenges such as
  - National Insurance rates increased from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025. The earnings threshold also reduced. As a result, more employees, particularly those working part-time who were previously below the threshold, are now required to pay National Insurance. This increases the employers national insurance amount payable.
  - Continuing inflationary pressures contributing to the rising costs of services and global events are likely to have a further impact upon costs.
  - Weakening demand across the sector nationally for hotel bedspace particularly in the last two quarters, however the Hotel is maintaining market share.

#### Economic and Regeneration Impact

16. The hotel continues to play a role in supporting the wider Tees Valley economy and the regeneration of Northshore. This includes:
  - providing accommodation capacity to support local industry and business travel, particularly during the working week;
  - supporting events and activity across the Borough and the wider Tees Valley, including cultural and business events;
  - contributing to the attractiveness of the area for inward investment; and
  - generating employment and local supply chain activity.
17. The pattern of demand continues to reflect the hotel's original positioning, with higher occupancy levels mid-week aligned to business use. Cabinet may wish to consider whether this strategic positioning remains appropriate or whether a broader balance of demand, including weekend and leisure activity, should be encouraged as part of a refreshed shareholder strategy.

#### Board of Directors

18. The board of directors for both companies are currently made up of three officers appointed by the Council (by Cabinet as an executive function) in it's capacity as shareholder. These roles are unremunerated and form part of the officers' wider responsibilities within the Council. One of the board members is due to retire from the Council later this year, and it is therefore appropriate to increase the number of board members to ensure sufficient board capacity.
19. In order to ensure continued Council representation on the boards, it is proposed that Lisa Tague, Strategic Finance Manager, be appointed as a director of both companies. It is recommended that further Council Officers are appointed to the board of directors for both companies, and the appointment of these is delegated to the Shareholder Representative, who is the Council's Section 151 Officer and Chief Financial Officer.

20. All directors are currently Council officers. In order to strengthen governance and introduce additional external perspective, it is proposed that the hotel company appoint at least one independent non-executive director with relevant sector experience. This role will be remunerated at an appropriate level and funded by the company. The level of remuneration will be determined by the Directors appointed by the shareholder and consistent with other similar Non Executive specialist advisors.
21. It is recommended that Cabinet agree in principle to the appointment of a non-executive director, with authority delegated to the Shareholder Representative to determine the appointment, recognising that under the emerging Shareholder Agreement such appointments would constitute a reserved matter.
22. The introduction of a non-executive director is expected to support business planning, provide independent challenge, and assist in managing the distinction between the Council's role as shareholder and the responsibilities of company directors.

### Shareholder Agreement

23. Work is currently nearing completion to further strengthen and formalise the relationship between the Council and the companies through a new Shareholder's Agreement. This will:
  - clarify the respective roles of the shareholder and the board;
  - establish reserved matters requiring shareholder approval;
  - strengthen reporting arrangements; and
  - support the development of a clearer strategic framework for the companies.

### **Corporate Parenting Implications**

24. There are no corporate parenting implications that arise from this report.

### **Financial Implications**

25. The Board of Directors for the Stockton Hotel Company Limited and Stockton Borough Holding Company Limited have agreed to release a dividend to the Council of £246,823. This was paid to the Council in February 2026.
26. The non-executive director will be remunerated at a level determined by the directors of the HotelCo. This cost will be met by the HotelCo.
27. The level of financial detail included in this report reflects the Council's role as shareholder. Consideration will continue to be given to the appropriate balance between transparency and commercial sensitivity in future reporting.

### **Legal Implications**

28. The Council has the legal power to own and operate trading companies under the Local Government Act 2003 (Section 95), supported by the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011. Stockton Hotels Company Ltd and its holding company, Stockton Borough Holding Company Ltd, are both wholly owned by the Council and were established in compliance with these statutory powers.

29. Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, the exercise of the Council's shareholder rights in a wholly owned company is an executive function, and therefore a matter for Cabinet. The proposals in this report are therefore properly within Cabinet's remit.
30. Officers appointed as directors of the companies do so in addition to their Council roles. Appropriate indemnity arrangements are in place to ensure that those roles are covered within the Council's governance framework.

#### **Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)**

31. This report does not relate to a specific geographic ward and therefore does not directly affect any individual ward or its elected members.
32. As the subject matter concerns corporate governance arrangements for Council-owned companies, consultation has taken place with relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers. No direct ward councillor consultation has been required under the terms of the Council's Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members.

#### **Background Papers**

33. North Shore Hotel, Report to Cabinet – 16 February 2016
34. North Shore Hotel, Report to Cabinet – 19 May 2016
35. Update of Governance Arrangements for the Council's Hotel Company, Report to Cabinet – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025

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## AGENDA ITEM

## REPORT TO CABINET

23 APRIL 2026

## REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

### CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION

Deputy Leader of the Council – Councillor Paul Rowling

## OPERATIONAL DEPOT PROVISION – ESTATE RATIONALISATION AND ACQUISITION

### Summary

The requirement for the Waste Transfer Station to become operational at the Yarm Road depot in April 2026 necessitated the temporary relocation of the Council's grounds maintenance service. While this arrangement has ensured continuity in the short term, it is not a sustainable or suitable long-term solution. There is therefore a need to secure a long-term, fit-for-purpose depot facility for the grounds maintenance team.

The need for a new depot has also provided an opportunity to review the Council's wider operational depot estate. This report outlines the findings of that review and seeks approval to acquire an identified depot site to meet the long-term operational needs of the grounds maintenance service. The proposed site also has the potential to accommodate additional operational services in the future, supporting broader estate rationalisation and income generation. Any such future proposals would be subject to separate business cases.

Financial and commercial details relating to the acquisition are presented within the confidential appendix.

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

The primary driver for the proposed acquisition is the urgent need to establish a long-term operational base for the Council's grounds maintenance service, which is currently operating from a temporary site not owned by the Council. This temporary arrangement limits the service's efficiency and does not provide the appropriate facilities required for long-term operations.

The identified depot site provides a facility that meets the service's operational requirements, including sufficient space for vehicles, equipment, and staff. Its characteristics also indicate potential to accommodate additional operational services in the future, supporting wider estate rationalisation. Any such future proposals would, however, require further detailed assessment and separate business cases.

The proposal is fully aligned with the Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025–2030 (SAMP), which emphasises proactive management of the Council’s assets to ensure they remain fit for purpose, support service delivery, and create opportunities to rationalise the estate and generate income

## Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the acquisition of the identified depot site to provide a long-term and fit-for-purpose operational base for the Council’s grounds maintenance service.
2. Note the findings of the operational depot review and acknowledge that, while the site offers potential to accommodate additional operational services, any such proposals will be subject to the development and approval of separate business cases.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Leader and Chief Finance Officer, to progress negotiations, undertake due diligence, agree terms, and complete the acquisition as set out in the confidential appendix.
4. Allocate up to £1.097m of capital grant funding for depots from DEFRA to acquire the site and deliver the works required to create a facility to enable the long-term delivery of the grounds maintenance service as a direct consequence of the establishment of the Waste Transfer Station.

## Detail

### 1. Strategic Context

1.1 The Council’s operational depot estate forms a critical part of its asset base, supporting the delivery of essential frontline services. Ensuring these facilities are efficient and aligned with long-term service needs is a key requirement of the SAMP. A recent review of depot provision has been undertaken within this strategic framework, focusing both on the immediate needs of the grounds maintenance service and the wider operational estate.

### 2. Grounds Maintenance – Current Position

2.1 The grounds maintenance service is currently operating from temporary accommodation after being required to vacate its previous depot at Yarm Road to facilitate the Waste Transfer Station. While this arrangement has enabled service continuity, it is not sustainable or suitable for long-term operations. The temporary site constraints and lack of essential facilities required for effective service delivery, including appropriate space for vehicle storage, equipment management, and staff welfare. This situation creates a clear and pressing need for a long-term operational base.

### 3. Proposed Depot Acquisition

3.1 A suitable depot site has been identified that offers the necessary space, layout, and flexibility to support the long-term operational requirements of the grounds maintenance service. Acquisition of this site would enable the service to transition from temporary arrangements into a secure, purpose-designed facility, improving operational efficiency, resilience, and service quality over time.

## 4. Opportunities

4.1 The scale and characteristics of the proposed depot site present an opportunity to consider broader reconfiguration of the Council's operational estate. The site has the capacity to accommodate additional operational services, enabling a more integrated and efficient depot model. Any future relocation proposals would require detailed analysis, including an assessment of operational needs, financial implications, and overall benefits, and would be presented in separate business cases.

4.2 Engagement with One Public Estate partners has already taken place to explore interest in co-location opportunities, with potential to reduce operating costs and generate income.

## 5. Estate Rationalisation

5.1 Securing a long-term depot for the grounds maintenance service will allow the Council to review and repurpose current temporary and legacy sites as part of a wider estate rationalisation programme. A potential facility has also been identified that could support the consolidation of several operational services currently distributed across multiple locations. A modern, consolidated operational base would strengthen efficiency, sustainability, and alignment with future service needs.

## 6. Funding

6.1. The Council received an original allocation of £1.4m capital transition funding in February 2024 to deliver the raft of legislative waste changes, including food waste collection.

6.2 The Council appealed this amount on the basis that the creation of a Waste Transfer Station and the increased number of vehicles requiring storage necessitated that the Grounds Maintenance Team had to be re-housed and an expansion to depot provision was required.

6.3 In late March 2026, Stockton received notification that their appeal had been considered, and the Council awarded a further £1.097m of funding from DEFRA under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The grant is provided on a non-ring-fenced basis, meaning that it can be applied to fund any capital expenditure.

6.4 It is recommended that this new funding be allocated to fund the capital costs outlined in the confidential appendix.

## Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

The proposals relate to operational infrastructure rather than public-facing services. While the changes will not directly affect residents, the improvements to operational efficiency will support stronger, more reliable service delivery across the borough.

An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment has been completed, and the outcomes were a neutral impact on the protected characteristics.

## Corporate Parenting Implications

There are no corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

## Financial Implications

The capital implications are outlined in the confidential appendix accompanying this report and are fully funded from the DEFRA capital grant for depot provision.

The revenue position is also detailed in the confidential appendix. There is no call on the MTFP as a consequence of this business case.

Any future decisions linked to locating further services within this provision are subject to individual business cases being agreed by Cabinet.

## Legal Implications

All property-related transactions will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's legal and constitutional requirements. Appropriate legal due diligence will be conducted to ensure the acquisition proceeds in accordance with statutory obligations and established governance processes.

## Risk Assessment

The proposal helps mitigate long-term operational risks by enabling a more efficient and consolidated depot estate. Securing a suitable, long-term facility strengthens strategic control of key operational assets and offers opportunities to generate additional income through partnership working.

## Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

There are no specific wards affected. The proposal provides a long-term depot facility for the grounds maintenance team to deliver its operational service across the borough.

## Background Papers

None.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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