

Children and Young People Select Committee
Alternative Provision (AP)
Scrutiny Review
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? This work aligns with the Council's priorities to ensure that all children have a bright future and a sense of belonging and giving children the best possible start in life, this is greater achieved when our children are educated and build connections within the borough. It aligns with the council vision to have a sustainable community where everyone belongs and is valued. The review supports Stockton on Tees Plan Priority One – The best start in life to achieve big ambitions and key move – Giving children and young people the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive. This scrutiny review would also support delivery of the following design principles: • reduce inequality and prioritise prevention • put communities at the heart of everything we do • use data and intelligence to inform our decision	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review? This scrutiny review will examine the Council's approach to Alternative Provision (AP), assessing whether current arrangements meet need and improve outcomes. There are increasing concerns about rising youth anti-social behaviour, persistent school absence, and pupils with complex needs remaining in mainstream settings without timely or effective intervention. Together, these issues suggest that some children may not be identified or supported early enough, resulting in poorer outcomes for individuals, schools, and the wider community. The review will consider whether Stockton has sufficient high-quality AP places, clear and timely referral pathways, and strong partnership working with schools and community-based providers.	

It will also examine current capacity and demand, waiting times, access thresholds, and the balance between early intervention and more reactive placements.

There is significant interest from residents, schools, and families in ensuring that behavioural and educational issues are addressed early, and that communities remain safe and welcoming. High-quality Alternative Provision can play a critical role in reducing anti-social behaviour, improving attendance, preventing escalation into criminal or exploitative behaviour and improving life chances.

Effective AP also brings wider benefits. It can contribute to safer neighbourhoods, reduce long-term costs associated with exclusion, youth justice, and social care, and ease pressure on schools and public services. In addition, reducing anti-social behaviour supports the better use and enjoyment of public spaces, improving overall community wellbeing.

The review will aim to identify how the AP system can be strengthened to support earlier and more effective intervention, reduce exclusions and persistent absence, lower repeat incidents of anti-social behaviour, and reduce future demand on other support services.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What are the reasons that children are placed in alternative provision?
- How has demand changed over time? What does the data tell us?
- Are particular groups more likely to access alternative provision?
- What proportion of children return to mainstream education? How is this managed?
- What is the AP Framework? How is quality measured?
- What are the outcomes for children accessing alternative provision? How is progress monitored? How is attendance tracked?
- How is alternative provision commissioned and monitored? What is the average cost per placement? Is there sufficient local provision? How is provision regulated?
- How do we ensure robust safeguarding in all AP settings?
- What do children and young people say about their experience of AP? How are their voices heard? How are mental health and emotional wellbeing supported?
- How do we engage with parents/ carers?
- What preventative strategies are in place in mainstream schools?
- How well do partners work together? Is there a shared AP strategy?
- What are the rules around OFSTED registration?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, schools and other partners

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

Six months:

Scope and Project Plan – 15 July 2026

Evidence gathering – September 2026 – December 2026

Draft Recommendations - 16 December 2026

Final Report – 13 January 2027

Submission to Cabinet – 15 February 2027

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

Data
Quality Assurance Reports
AP Plans
Government Guidance
Local Area Reform Plan – Draft
AP Framework

New information:

SEND and AP Ofsted Report and Action Plan
Views of children and young people, parents/ carers
Views of partners

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Council Officers

Data on AP capacity, demand, costs, and outcomes; explain commissioning, safeguarding, and referral processes; highlight risks, gaps, and planned improvements; demonstrate how AP aligns with wider strategies (education, inclusion, early help).

Partner Agencies

Insight into multi-agency working; what are the outcomes for children accessing AP?; provide evidence on effectiveness of provision; identify systemic issues and opportunities for joint working and early intervention. How do providers feel about navigating the framework?

Parents/ Carers

Lived experience of the referral process and support received; highlight barriers to accessing AP; provide feedback on communication, quality of provision, and impact on their child; suggest improvements from a family perspective.
Young People perspective

Young People

First-hand insight into the quality of education and support; describe whether they feel safe, engaged, and supported; highlight what works well and what doesn't; inform whether AP is helping them progress and achieve positive outcomes.

School Support

Early intervention and behaviour support strategies; pressures and gaps in provision.

How will this information be gathered? (e.g. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey) Committee meetings, visits to alternative provision, talking to young people
How will key partners and the public be involved in the review? As above.
How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty? The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics, including Disability. The Council is under a duty to: • Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act. • Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. • Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The review will contribute towards meeting the Council's requirements under this Duty, particularly in relation to the outcomes for more vulnerable children. Completion of an Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) will be integral to the Select Committee review.
How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy? <u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023:</u> All children and families get the best start in life. All people in Stockton-on-Tees live well and live longer. All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities.
Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation: The review would aim to: • Assess whether current AP provision meets local need • Identify gaps in availability, quality, or referral processes • Explore opportunities to support community-based providers, such as voluntary or third-sector organisations • Make recommendations to improve outcomes for young people and communities • The overall aim is a coherent, high-quality Alternative Provision offer that reduces exclusion and promotes youth engagement

Project Plan			
Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	June 2026	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	25 June 2026	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member, Director, Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Scope and Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee and Introductory Presentation	15 July 2026	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	N/A		
Obtaining Evidence		16/30 September 2026 TBC 14 October 2026 11 November 2026	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	16 December 2026	Select Committee (Informal Session)
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	January 2027	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBA	Select Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, Cabinet Member, Director, Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report by Select Committee	Approval of final report by CYP Select Committee	13 January 2027	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny	Consideration of report	19 January 2027	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	11 February 2027	Cabinet