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Gateshead Council

FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 1.30 pm in the Bridges Room

From the Chief Executive, Sheena Ramsey

Item	Business
1	**Apologies**
2	**Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 30 November 2023
3	**Schools Performance Overview Report** (Pages 7 - 26) *Including: attendance, attainment, exclusion data, and OFSTED outcomes.* Report of Suzanne Dunn, Service Director for Education, Schools and Inclusion
4	**Early Years Sufficiency** (Pages 27 - 32) Report of Suzanne Dunn, Service Director for Education, Schools and Inclusion
5	**Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report** (Pages 33 - 38) Report of Victoria McKay, Practice Lead for Childrens Social Care and Lifelong Learning Presented by Andrea Houlahan, Deputy Strategic Director for Childrens Social Care and Lifelong Learning
6	**Work Programme** (Pages 39 - 42) Report of the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Corporate Services & Governance

Contact: Grace Anderson, Tel: 0191 433 4635,
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GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, 30 November 2023

PRESENT:	Councillor M Hall (Chair)
	Councillor(s): D Burnett, D Bradford, L Caffrey, B Clelland, P Craig, K Henderson, H Kelly, K McCartney, J Mohammed, R Mullen and D Robson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Councillor(s):
APOLOGIES:	Councillor(s): L Moir, A Ord, M Ord, D Weatherley and Rachel Walton

F112   MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

F113   PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK - SIX MONTH UPDATE - 2023-24

The Committee received a report on the Council's Performance Management & Improvement Framework, reporting performance on the delivery of Council priorities for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. An overview was given of performance relevant to the role and remit of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee The framework has been put together to support Gateshead Council's THRIVE strategy. It was noted that some metrics included in the report are annual measures which are reporting figures at a six-month mark.

A presentation was also given to the Committee on making data accessible for scrutiny, including a demonstration of Power BI and how this can be used to track data for the newly established Office for Local Government.

The Committee felt that the presentation of the data was not very accessible, as the text and graphics were too small to read properly.

The Committee queried the decrease in use of free school meals for primary school children. There is cross Council work ongoing with Services for Schools, the Education Team, and Schools Team. This work includes a survey on auto enrolment; some families feel that there is a stigma in accessing free school meals, there is work being done to address this culture. While auto enrolment would be a preferred option, the scheme is national and would have to be identically implemented across all participating local authorities. Gateshead is trying to be at the forefront of a pilot of this.

Further data breakdown was requested on the 10% of pupils who have missed significant numbers of lessons. It was noted that there is a lag in this data, as numbers for Autumn terms had not yet been reported. Attendance is a national priority, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. National and regional solutions to this issue are being pursued.

A detailed report is expected by Families OSC at the next meeting which will focus on looked after children.

RESOLVED

    i.   The Committee noted the report.

F114   **DELIVERY OF THERAPY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN - IMPACT AND OUTCOMES**

The Committee received a report on the current delivery of therapy services for children in Gateshead, outlining the functions which the three therapeutic services (SALT, Physiotherapy and OT) deliver, the anticipated impact of receiving such a service and the outcome measures collated. Since the SEND inspection, progress has been made on waiting times.

Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

Within Gateshead Health, there is a team of 24 Speech and Language Therapists who offer support and treatment to children within the Borough. The teams are linked with existing school provision, including special schools and ARMS provision. The impact of high quality, timely intervention can achieve the following outcomes:

- Provide learning opportunities for the development of skills, confidence, and competencies through a range of mechanisms and mediums including coaching, modelling and learning activities.
- Raise awareness of speech, language, communication and swallowing needs and their impact on an individual's ability to take part in day -to - day activities (especially in the workplace and educational settings) and advocate for children and young people's rights and needs.
- Provides reassurance, coaching and learning opportunities to enable families to support communication and swallowing development.
- Provides advice, training and support to early years, schools, community and other settings to foster inclusive environments.
- Develops and delivers evidence based functional interventions in partnership with children and young people, their families and others around them.
- Provide children and young people with access to approaches and resources so they can communicate.
- Provides training and support to families and other professionals so that they can safely support children with eating, drinking and swallowing.

At present the teams have been focusing on reducing the waiting times for an assessment through collaborative work with Portage, group work, parent

support and outreach. The number of children waiting for assessment has reduced by 77% since August 2023 with 4 children waiting over 18 weeks in mid-November. Patients are then appointed for a block of therapy dependent on clinical assessment. Work is ongoing to reduce this further.

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Within Gateshead there is a small team of specialist paediatric OT's who deliver targeted and specialist interventions to children on referral from universal services. Many children with the most complex needs require support and equipment to develop more personal independence, OT's have skills that allow them to do so and without their input children can become socially isolated and marginalised.

OT's select interventions for children based upon an assessment of the child, whether they are affected by disability and how their environment supports or constrains them in reaching their full potential.

The team is working on reducing the waiting times for Paediatric OT. Full recruitment has now taken place and they have commenced a number of new initiatives, focusing on group work sessions and structured information support, as well as working with colleagues across the region to build on successful programmes such as "Sensational Thinking" which delivers two sessions for patients with sensory challenges to support them and their families to address any issues which they have. These alternatives to traditional ways of service delivery will yield results with ambitious plans to reduce the waiting list significantly by March 2024.

There remains a significant wait for these services, details of which can be found at point 6.

The team collect outcome measures based on the achievement of individual goals set for each child (for example, dressing, holding a pencil).

Physiotherapy

The team within Gateshead work collaboratively to maximise children's potential.

The physiotherapy team also run regular orthotic clinics supported by an Orthotist. Physiotherapy in school is integrated into the school day.

There is currently a short wait for children's physiotherapy within Gateshead with children seen promptly.

The team collect a variety of outcome measures including those relating to CPIPS (Cerebral Palsy), GMFCS (Cerebral Palsy), AIMS (Delayed development), Beighton Scale (Hypermobility), Wong Baker Scale (Pain), Two-minute walk test (Mobility), Goal Attainment Scale (all children), Modified Ashworth Scale (children with neurological difficulties), Pirani Scale (Talipies), Star Balance Scale (children with neurological difficulties.

The Committee was concerned about the impact of resource shortage on contact time being reduced in therapies.

Significant challenges around selective muteness and potential future cases around motor control were both highlighted as consequences of COVID 19.

Links have been established in schools to identify difficulties that children may be experiencing, there is also consideration being made of best practice across the region.

The Committee was pleased to hear about the holistic approach and the work done to include schools in therapeutic work.

RESOLVED

  i. To circulate further information to the Committee on cases of selective muteness.
  ii. The Committee noted the report.

F115   OVERVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

F116   WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report on the work programme for the OSC meetings. The 2023/24 work programme remains provisional.

RESOLVED

  i. The Committee noted the report.

F117   DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on 18 January 2024, 13:30 in The Bridges Room.

Chair………..……………..

Gateshead Council

FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 January 2024

TITLE OF REPORT: Schools Performance Overview Report:

REPORT OF: Helen Fergusson, Director of Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

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Summary

1   This report details the position of Gateshead schools in relation to:

- Ofsted Inspection findings for September 2022 - December 2023.
- Outcomes of Gateshead students in relation to tests and examinations 2022-23.
- Exclusions in Gateshead for the academic year 2022-2023.
- Elective Home Education (Academic Year 2022-23)
- School Attendance (Academic Year 2022-23: Autumn and Spring Term)

Ofsted Inspections Findings

Background

2   September 2019 saw the introduction of a new schools' inspection framework – the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). This framework differed quite considerably from the previous version. There is a significant focus on the quality of the curriculum. Schools receive an overall effectiveness grade based on a sub grade for each of the following areas:

- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

3   The quality of Early Years and 6th Forms are also inspected.

Ofsted use the following grading system:

1 = Outstanding
2 = Good
3 = Requires Improvement
4 = Inadequate

4   Inspections were paused during the pandemic and reinstated in September 2021. This resulted in slight changes to the timing of inspections. The most significant change has been that outstanding schools which were previously exempt from routine inspection are once again being inspected.

5   Terminology has changed since September 2022. Schools receive either a graded inspection (which can change the overall effectiveness of a school) or an ungraded inspection (where the overall effectiveness cannot change).

6   In Gateshead 16 primary schools and 2 secondary schools joined BWCET (Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust). This means they are new schools and may not be inspected for 3 years after conversion to an academy. One school is still in the process of converting to join BWCET.

7   Full copies of all inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Outcomes September 2022 - December 2023

Primary/Nursery School	School Type	Previous Inspection	Present Inspection
Blaydon West Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Carr Hill Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Clover Hill Community Primary School	Maintained	Outstanding	Good
Corpus Christi	Primary converter academy	Outstanding	Outstanding
Crookhill Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Dunston Hill Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Fell Dyke Community Primary School	Maintained	Requires Improvement	Good
Front Street Primary School	Maintained	Outstanding	Outstanding
Harlow Green Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Highfield St Joseph's	Maintained	Good	Good
Kibblesworth Academy	Primary converter academy	Good	Good

Oakfield Infant School	Maintained	Outstanding	Requires Improvement
Oakfield Junior School	Maintained	Good	Good
Parkhead Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Roman Road Primary School	Maintained	Inadequate	Good
Portobello Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Rowlands Gill Primary School	Maintained	Requires Improvement	Good
Ryton Community Infant School	Maintained	Good	Good
South Street Community Primary School	Maintained	Requires Improvement	Requires Improvement
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	Primary converter academy	N/A	Good
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Blaydon	Primary converter academy	N/A	Good
St Joseph's Gateshead	Primary converter academy	N/A	Good
Swalwell Primary School	Maintained	Requires Improvement	Good
The Drive Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
White Mere Community Primary	Maintained	Good	Good
Windy Nook Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good
Winlaton West Lane Community Primary School	Maintained	Good	Good

Secondary School	School Type	Previous Inspection	Present Inspection
Grace College	Secondary converter academy	N/A	Requires Improvement
Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy	Secondary converter academy	Requires Improvement	Good
St Thomas More Catholic School	Secondary converter academy	Outstanding	Good
Whickham School	Secondary converter academy	Good	Good

Independent schools

8   There are currently (Oct 23) 8 independent schools in Gateshead. 3 are graded good and 5 are graded requires improvement.

Summary of outcomes (as at 27/10/23)

	Good/Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Gateshead All	88%	20%	68%	12%	0%
Gateshead excluding independent (includes special)	93%	22%	71%	7%	0%
Gateshead primary excluding independent	94%	18%	76%	6%	0%
Gateshead secondary excluding independent	78%	22%	56%	22%	0%
England (all schools) as at 27/10/23. Data from Watchsted	89%	14%	75%	9%	2%

Outcomes of Gateshead Students in Relation to Tests and Examinations 2022-23

Background

9   Outcomes from examinations and assessments taken in the summer of 2023 are published nationally for the first time since the pandemic.

10   The following tests and assessments took place in primary schools:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of Reception Year when most children are 5. This assessment has been revised since 2019 so no comparison can be made with previous years.

- Phonics screen at the end of Year 1 when children are 6. Children who do not meet the required standard are tested again in Year 2.

- Reading, writing and maths assessments at the end of Year 2 when children are 7. Teachers assess whether children have met the expected standard using a combination of tests and criteria set by government. These assessments will be optional from this academic year onwards. Schools may choose to use national materials or complete their own teacher assessments.

- Multiplication check at the end of Year 4 when children are 9. The government publish the national average score achieved. This has yet to be released.

- Reading, maths and grammar punctuation and spelling tests at the end of Year 6 when children are 11. Government sets the expected standard based on scores in the tests. Children are also assessed in writing through a set of criteria used by teachers to check whether the expected standard has been met or not.

- Information about how children performed at the end of Year 6 is compared with how they performed in Year 2 and a progress score for the school (not individual children) is calculated. A score of 0 is expected progress.

Outcomes

- The impact of the pandemic continues to be evident in outcomes from tests and assessments taken by the youngest children in primary schools (EYFSP data). There has been an improvement on the previous year in Gateshead and nationally. Gateshead outcomes are not significantly different from national other than for children with SEN. Children with SEN achieved well compared to those with SEN nationally.

- Year 1 and Year 2 phonic screen outcomes. Outcomes are slowly beginning to return to levels seen pre pandemic nationally and for Gateshead. The widest gaps between Gateshead and national are for children whose home language is not English. Once children have mastered the language, they catch up quickly with peers.

- KS1 assessments at age 7. Schools have focussed on the basics of reading, writing and mathematics to support children to catch up.

Outcomes are slowly beginning to return to levels seen pre pandemic nationally and for Gateshead. Gateshead outcomes are not significantly different from national other than for children whose home language is not English. Once children have mastered the language, they catch up quickly with peers.

- In KS2 assessments at age 11, pupils outperformed their peers nationally in all subjects. Reading outcomes have returned to pre pandemic levels nationally. Gateshead outcomes are higher than this. There has been a significant amount of work with schools and by schools to close gaps in reading. The impact on writing outcomes continues to be seen at a national and local level.

- No direct comparison should be made with 2022 outcomes for GCSEs as the grading system changed. Gateshead students generally performed better than National in GCSE outcomes – except in progress measures.

Below national by more than 8%

Below national by more than 2% but not signi

Above national

EYFSP

GLD	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	67.6	74.0	61.5	60.4	52.7	24.7
National	67.2	74.2	60.6	62.7	52.0	19.9

Phonics Year 1

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	78.2	81.9	74.6	73.7	65.2	42.4
National	78.9	82.4	75.5	78.4	66.7	42.2

Phonics Year 2

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	89.4	91.6	83.7	81.6	83.7	66.8
National	88.6	91.2	86.2	87.7	81.0	58.8

KS1
Reading Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	67.5	71.2	63.9	55.6	55.5	31.4
National	68.3	71.8	64.8	64.8	53.9	27.8

Writing Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	59.6	65.6	53.9	50.8	45.5	18.4
National	60.1	66.2	54.3	58.7	44.4	18.7

Maths Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	70.2	70.0	70.4	62.9	58.2	32.4
National	70.4	70.2	70.6	69.2	55.7	32.0

Key Stage 2
Reading Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	76.9	78.6	75.2	64.6	66.1	49.3
National	72.6	75.6	69.8	69.7	60.2	38.5

Writing Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	72.8	78.7	67.2	65.4	58.6	32.1
National	71.5	78.2	65.1	71.7	58.1	28.9

Maths Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	75.9	75.5	76.3	73.8	63.1	38.5
National	72.9	72.3	73.4	77.3	58.7	36.2

GPS Expected

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	75.7	78.8	72.8	71.1	64.3	40.5
National	72.3	76.5	68.2	74.9	58.9	32.8

KS2 Progress Reading

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	0.7	0.8	0.6	1.2	0.3	-0.2
National	0	0.3	-0.2	0.6	- 0.9	-1.4

KS2 Progress Writing

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	-0.1	0.8	-0.9	1.4	-0.6	-1.9
National	0	0.9	-0.8	1.3	-0.7	-2.2

KS2 Progress Maths

	All	Girls	Boys	EAL	Disadvantaged	SEN
Gateshead	0.2	-0.5	0.9	3.5	-0.3	-1.2
National	0	-0.8	0.8	2.3	-1.1	-1.6

KS4

	A8	P8	% E&M 9-5	% Ebacc entry	Ebacc APS
Gateshead	47.5	-0.11	45.3%	48.2%	4.19
National	46.9	0	45.1%	39.0%	4.05
SEN support Gateshead	33.9	-0.52	18.7%	24.2%	2.80
SEN support National	33.0	-0.46	20.3%	18.7%	2.74
SEN EHCP Gateshead	13.0	-1.11	7.4%	7.4%	1.06
SEN EHCP National	14.0	-1.14	6.8%	4.2%	1.11
Disadvantaged Gateshead	35.5	-0.80	25.5%	35.7%	3.04
Disadvantaged National	34.7	-0.59	24.5%	27.1%	2.94
Female Gateshead	50.2	+0.03	50.6%	52.2%	4.41

Female National	48.6	+0.11	47.2%	43.6%	4.24
Male Gateshead	44.9	-0.25	43.6%	44.1%	3.96
Male National	44.0	-0.18	43.0%	34.7%	3.87

School Exclusions

Background

11   The government supports headteachers in using suspension and permanent exclusion as a sanction when warranted as part of creating a calm, safe, and supportive environment in which pupils can learn and thrive. To achieve this, suspension and permanent exclusion are sometimes a necessary part of a functioning system, where it is accepted that not all pupil behaviour can be amended or remedied by pastoral processes, or consequences within the school.

12   The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:

- in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; **and**
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school.

Exclusion information 2022-2023

Permanent exclusion data:

13   Permanent exclusion rates over a 3 year period. NB National Data for 2022-23 is not yet available:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
National permanent exclusion rate	0.06%	0.05%	0.04%
Gateshead permanent exclusion rate	0.11%	0.13%	0.10%

14   The number of pupils permanently excluded from Gateshead schools over a three-year period and including Autumn 2023:

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions (Total)	Permanent Exclusion (Secondary/ Primary)	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
2020/21	42	42/0	19	8	15
2021/22	50	49/1	18	19	13
2022/23	94	92/2	32	31	31
2023/24 (Autumn only)		29/0	29	NA	NA

15	Permanent exclusions per school 2022-23 and Autumn term 2023:

School	Total permanent exclusions issued		Total withdrawn/not upheld		Total resident in another authority	
	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24
1	5	5		1		1
2	7	1				
3	21	5				
4	7	2				
5	12	5				
6	11	3			2	1
7 (Out of Area)	1	1				
8	2		1		1	
9 (Out of Area)	3					
10	5	1	1			
11	10	2	2			
12 (Out of Area)	1	1		1		
13	9	3			3	1
Total	94	29	4	2	6	3

* Out of Area: a child from Gateshead who attends a school in a different LA eg on the boundary such as South Tyneside.

16	Pupil profile at the point of permanent exclusion:

Pupil profile	2022/23	2023/24 (Autumn term)
CioC	0	1 (rescinded)
Child Protection	2	1
Child in Need	10	0
Early Help	18	5
Not known to CSC	64	23
Pupil Premium	52	19
Non-pupil premium	42	10
SEN(K)	44	14
EHCP	2 (1x rescinded)	1 (rescinded)
Non-SEN	48	14
Male	69	20
Female	25	9
Y4	1	
Y5	1	
Y7	18	2
Y8	21	12
Y9	24	6
Y10	18	4

Y11	11	5

17   Breakdown of permanent exclusions upheld by reason in academic year 2022-2023:

Reason	Number
Physical assault	25
Verbal abuse	14
Bullying	0
Racist incident	0
Sexual misconduct	0
Drug/alcohol	2
Damage	2
Theft	2
Persistent disruptive behaviour	43
Inappropriate use of social media	1
Other	5

Suspension rate data:

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
National suspension rate	4.17%	4.14%	4.25%
Gateshead suspension	4.77%	6.88%	7.93%

Totals suspension issued 2022 - 2023

	2022-23	Autumn 2023
Suspension issued:	3788	670
SEN (K)	1300	232
EHCP	160	21
Males	2253	402
Females	1535	268
Pupil Premium	2732	

Summary

Permanent Exclusions

- The rate of permanent exclusion over the three-year period is above the national average and has risen significantly in the last year by 47%.
- Permanent Exclusion from Academies / Non-maintained schools, account for 82% of these.
- There is one school who has a disproportionately high rate of Permanent Exclusions this year which has added disproportionately to the rise this year.
- Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be cited as the main reason for a permanent exclusion accounting for 43% of all permanent exclusions.
- In 2022-2023 boys represented the highest number of permanent exclusions that were issued and upheld. This is a trend continuing from the previous year.
- In 2022-2023 Key Stage 3 was the phase where most permanent exclusions were issued and upheld. This is a trend continuing from the previous year.

- In 2022-2023 persistent disruptive behaviour was the predominant reason cited for issuing a permanent exclusion.

Suspensions

- The rate of suspensions over the three-year period is above the national average.
- In 2022-2023 males represented the highest number of suspensions issued. A trend that is reflected in permanent exclusions that were issued.
- In 2022-2023 pupils identified as pupil premium were twice as likely to be issued with a suspension than those not identified as pupil premium.

Addressing the challenge:

18   The reduction of exclusions is a key focus of local area work across the Gateshead system so that we can achieve a cultural change, supported by the SEN and emerging Alternative Provision strategic plan.

19   This SEN / AP strategic plan will pay particular attention to early intervention through the SEN framework (with a focus on the Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs of the students) but also on building capacity within schools to adapt policy, procedure and practice through the work of the newly established Quality Assurance team, SENIT (LINT, HINT) and health.

20   The strategy will:
   i.   Build on the assessment hubs being established through the SEN plan action plan. This will allow identification of need/s and provide timely intervention before behaviours identified escalate to a point of exclusion for the child.
   ii.   Develop an outreach model from commissioned provider River Tyne Academy to build capacity within Secondary schools to be able to intervene and support students on the edge of exclusion, to prevent them from being excluded from school/
   iii.   Develop an advocacy offer to parents/carers that will support them through their rights to challenge schools when students reach 15 days exclusion or are permanently excluded. This will quality assure that schools are doing everything possible to intervene and support, before issuing an exclusion and will encourage them to reconsider or look for alternative strategies.
   iv.   Analyse the data collected from schools and intervene with an offer of support when the number of suspensions begin to escalate in specific establishments and share trends in data, in order to work collectively on specific emerging themes or local issues.
   v.   Work proactively with schools to support them with assessing the right support when faced with challenging disruptive behaviour, especially males in KS3 and pupil premium students, eg HINT, Educational Psychologists and applications with EHCP, where appropriate.
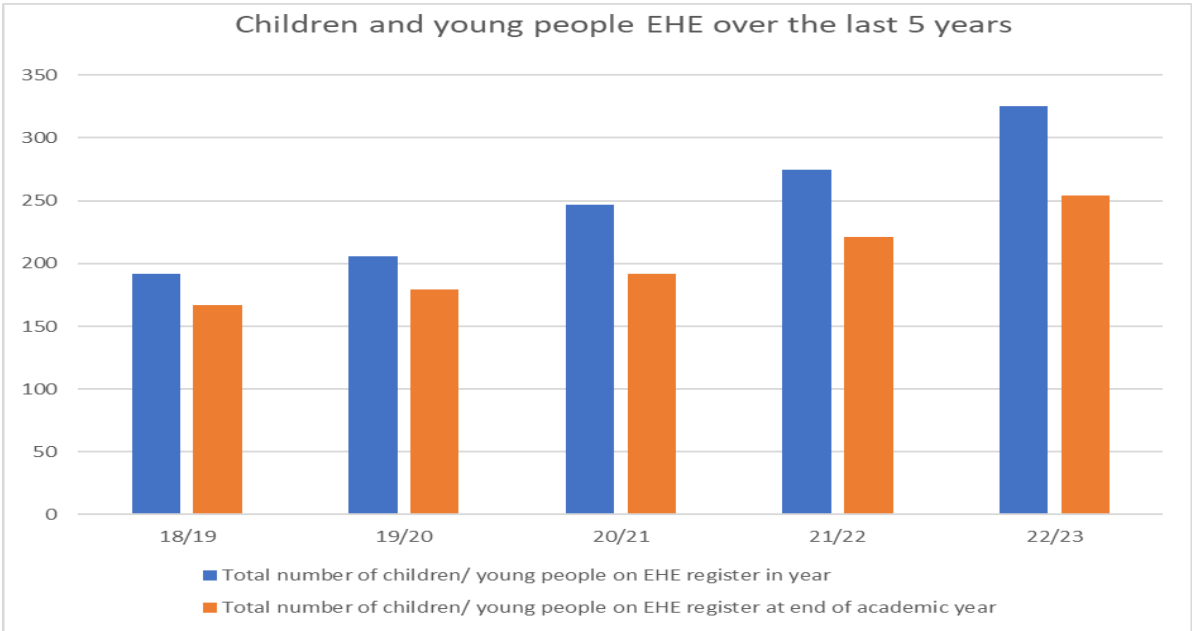
Elective Home Education

Background

21   Elective Home Education (EHE) is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. Parents have a right to educate their children at home, and the government wants the many parents who do it well to be supported.

22   Parents who choose to educate a child in these ways rather than sending the child to school full-time take on financial responsibility for the cost of doing so, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision.

23   One of the most significant issues for any local authorities is maintaining adequate oversight. In Gateshead Local Authority the Elective Home Education officers maintain close links with other services and conduct a multi-agency elective home education group once per month to ensure information is shared so as far as it is possible to do so, so that the identities of children who may be being electively home educated are established so that it can be established if they are receiving a full time, suitable education.

Elective Home Education 2022-2023 Data Set:

Elective Home Education Annual Report 2022/23

24   Home education numbers have continued to increase over the last 5 years. Many parents have indicated that they feel they have no other choice, due their children's needs.

Table 1 – Number of children and young people EHE over last 5 years

- There were 325 children and young people open on the Elective Home Education (EHE) registers in 2022/23. This was a 18% increase compared to 2021/22 and a 69% increase since 2018/19. This increase is in line with national trends.

- There were 91 primary aged children EHE and 234 secondary children EHE in 2022/23.

- There were 47 children and young people who were at SEN support level and 11 children who had an EHCP on the register in 2022/23. This was a 11% increase from 2021/22.

- There were 145 males EHE and 180 females EHE. Over the last 5 years there have been more females EHE than males.

- The number of children and young people on the EHE register changes throughout the year. At the end of the academic year there were 254 children and young people open on the EHE register.

Table 2:

25   **Active cases:** As of 13th December 2023, there are **236** pupils open as active cases on the EHE register. Of these **56** have been added to the EHE register from 4th September 2023.
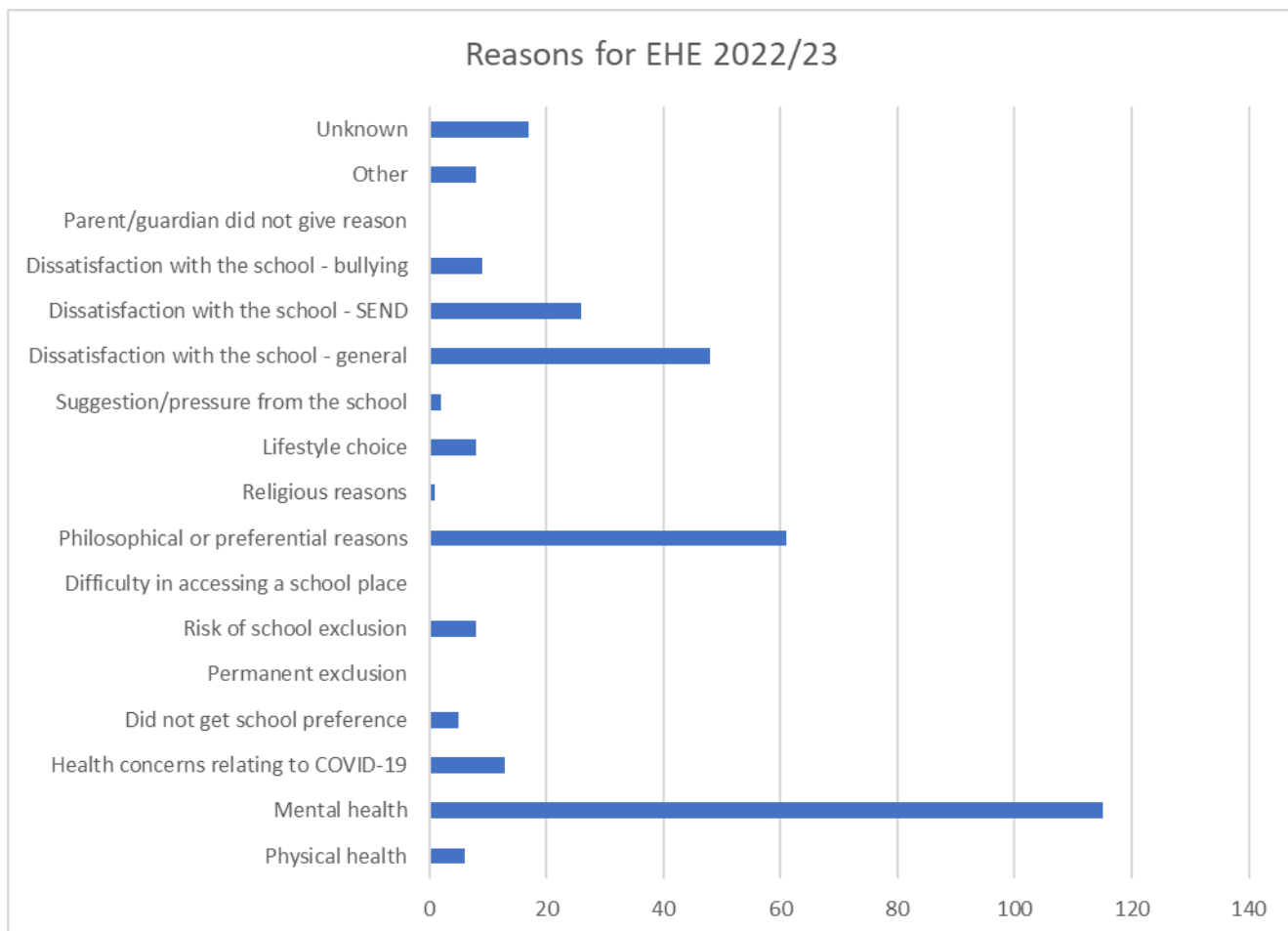
26   The current **236** open cases are made up of the following age ranges:

Year	Number
R	5
1	5
2	15
3	4
4	12
5	10
6	15
7	20
8	31
9	35
10	43
11	41

27   The current open cases are made up of:

9 pupils open to Early Help
2 pupils open to CSC at CIN (CIN assessment)
0 pupils open to CSC as CP
46 pupils that were SENK **at the point of deregistration from school.**
9 pupils that had an EHCP plan **at the point of deregistration from school.**

Table 3 – Reason why parent removed child or young person from school to EHE.

Reasons for EHE 2022/23

Chart showing reasons for EHE 2022/23 (horizontal bar chart). Categories (top to bottom): Unknown (~16), Other (~8), Parent/guardian did not give reason (0), Dissatisfaction with the school - bullying (~9), Dissatisfaction with the school - SEND (~26), Dissatisfaction with the school - general (~47), Suggestion/pressure from the school (~2), Lifestyle choice (~8), Religious reasons (~1), Philosophical or preferential reasons (~61), Difficulty in accessing a school place (0), Risk of school exclusion (~8), Permanent exclusion (0), Did not get school preference (~5), Health concerns relating to COVID-19 (~13), Mental health (~115), Physical health (~6).

- In 2022/23 mental health was the most common reason for home educating. Dissatisfaction with school when combined (general, SEND and bullying) were a more common reason that philosophical/ preferential reasons which were historically the most common reason for EHE.

Other data

- The most significant rise in number of young people being deregistered from school was in Y9 where there was a 96% increase; this cohort had the most significant % rise in the previous year. Most of the Y9 children who were deregistered this year cite poor mental health or dissatisfaction with school as the reason for deregistration. The Y9 cohort also had the most referrals to PPP indication Covid may have had a significant impact on this year group.
- There are 38 children on the EHE register who have never attended a school setting.
- In 2022/23 there were 146 children who are currently or historically open to Childrens Services at CP, CIN or Early Help. There were 8 open to CIN and 27 open to Early Help in the year 2022/23
- There were 51 children and young people who returned to mainstream education in 2022/23, often supported via the Fair Access Process.
- 3 CME referrals were completed for children who left area with no forwarding address.
- There is the equivalent on 1.2 full time member of staff supporting the Elective home education process.

Summary

I.   There is an increasing trend of parents who are choosing to educate their children at home in Gateshead, in line with the National Averages, especially post covid.

II.   There are robust processes in place to oversee and support the arrangements for children educated at home to ensure they are receiving appropriate education and they are safe.

III.   Protocols are in place to ensure good information sharing between education and social care teams where children are known to both and there are no children electively home educated who are subject to a child protection plan.

IV.   Although Primary, SEND and EHCP numbers remain static from 2021-22, Secondary numbers have increased by 29% which is concerning and attributed to the increase in mental health concerns, post pandemic. This is reflected in 'Mental Health' being cited most by parents, as the reason for EHE followed by Philosophical or Preferential Reasons which pre-pandemic, was the highest category.

V.   There is a well-established elective home education multi-agency group. This is where colleagues from health, children's social care and education can explore any concerns, seek information around children, and ensures a sound overview of children who are electively home educated.

School Attendance (Academic Year 2022-23)

Background

29   Regular school attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

30   Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.

31   In Gateshead, once a school has exhausted all strategies available to them to support an improvement in a child/young person's attendance, a referral can be made to Legal Intervention Team for formal action to be taken against the parents for failing in their legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

32   Good school attendance is considered to be an attendance percentage approximately 95%+. The Department for Education calculate an overall national absence rate. Pupils are considered to be **persistently absent** (PA) if their attendance falls below 90%. The Department for Education calculate an overall national persistent absent rate from this.

School Attendance 2022-2023 Data Set:

33   The national and Gateshead overall absence rate

	2018-2019	2019-2020 Autumn term	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023 **Autumn+spring term only**	2022-2023 Full year
National rate	4.8	4.9	4.6	7.6 (+3)	7.3 Aut+spring term 2021-2022: 7.4	Not available
Gateshead rate	4.6	5.7	5	8.3 (+3.3)	7.5 Aut+spring term 2021-2022: 8.1	8

() increase/decrease from previous full year comparison only
Pandemic absence statistics suspended spring/summer

34   The national and Gateshead % persistent absence (less than 90% attendance):

	2018-2019	2019-2020 Autumn term only	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023 **Autumn+spring term only**	2022-2023 Full year
National rate	18.5	13.2	12.1	22.5 (+)	21.2	Not available
Gateshead rate	17.9	15.9	13.4	24.3 (+)	21.2	23.3

() increase/decrease from previous full year
Pandemic absence statistics suspended spring/summer

35   The national and Gateshead % severe persistent absence (less than 50% attendance):

	2018-2019	2019-2020 Autumn term only	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023 **Autumn+spring term only**	2022-2023 Full year
National rate		0.9%	1.1	1.7 (+0.6)	1.9	Not available
Gateshead rate		0.9%	1.2	2.2 (+1.1)	2.2	Not avaiable

increase/decrease from previous full year
Pandemic absence statistics suspended spring/summer

Summary

I.   Overall absence rates have been above the national average. Pupils in Gateshead schools attend school less regualrly than other pupils nationally.
% persistent absence have been above national average in 2021 and 2022.
% persistent absence have been above national average in 2022 and showed a sharper increase than that seen nationally.

II. As reported in Nexus for the full year 2022-2023:
* Overall absence - 43 schools had strengths compared to 29 who had challenges
*Persistent absence 44 schools had strengths compared to 31 who had challenges
*Severely persistently absent – 46 schools had strengths compared to 26 who had challenges.

Absence breakdown from Census information (rounded):

National average (NA) is provided where available.

	Attendance %		% Persistent absence	
	Autumn + spring term 2022-2023	Full year 2022-2023	Autumn + spring term 2022-2023	Full year 2022-2023
All pupils	92.4 NA: 92.7	92 NA not available	21.2 NA: 21.2	23.3
Primary	94.3 NA: 94	5.67 NA not available	15.1 NA: 17.3	
Secondary	90.6 NA: 91.3	88.9 NA not available	28.5 NA: 25.2	
Special	89.86 NA: 86.8	89.7 NA not available	28.5 NA: 39.1	

	Attendance %		% Persistent absence	
	Autumn + spring term 2022-2023	Full year 2022-2023	Autumn + spring term 2022-2023	Full year 2022-2023
SEN K	89.2 NA: 89.9	91.5	31.3 NA: 30.8	24.9
EHCP	89.5 NA: 87.6	90.8	29.3 NA: 36.3	26.5
No SEN	93.2 NA: 93.5	92.1	19.1 NA: 18.5	22.8
Pupil premium	88.7 NA: 89.1	88.4	35 NA: 35.7	36.8
Non-pupil premium	99.4 NA: 94	94	13.9 NA: 15.9	15.2
Male	92.4 NA: 92.7	92	21.4 NA: 21.2	23.1
Female	92.5 NA: 92.7	92	21.4 NA: 21.3	23.5

	Attendance %		% Persistent absence	
	Autumn + spring	Full year 2022-	Autumn + spring	Full year 2022-

	term 2022-2023	2023	term 2022-2023	2023
Y1	94.2	94	17	
Y2	94.5 NA: 94	94.4	14.3 NA: 17.6	
Y3	94.7 NA: 94.3	94.6	15.1 NA: 16	
Y4	94.8 NA: 94.3	94.6	14.2 NA: 16	
Y5	94.8 NA: 94.2	94.5	14.3 NA: 16.3	
Y6	94.3 NA: 94	94.2	16.1 NA: 16.9	
Y7	92.5 NA: 93.4	91.7	21.4 NA: 18.5	23.4
Y8	90.6 NA: 91.8	90	27.5 NA: 24.3	29.1
Y9	88.2 NA: 90.7	87.9	32.2 NA: 27.4	33.5
Y10	87.3 NA: 90	86.8	35 NA: 28.9	35.2
Y11	88 NA: 89.8	84.6	32.4 NA: 28.2	53.1

Summary (cont)

Autumn + Spring term 2022-2023 data set compared to national average (NA) figures

- I. Attendance percentages for all pupils and primary phase was broadly in line with national averages for the period.
- II. Pupils attending special schools' overall attendance was better than pupils in the same provision nationally.
- III. Overall attendance percentage in Gateshead secondary schools was below the overall national average for this phase.
- IV. Overall % persistent absence was in line with national average. Gateshead's decline in this measure in 2022-2023 was at a faster rate than seen nationally when compared to the same period last year.
- V. Overall % severe persistent absence is above national average. However, Gateshead's increase is at a slower rate than that seen nationally when compared to the same period last year.

Autumn + Spring term 2022-2023 group comparison

- VI. Overall attendance % strengths in EHCP and non-pupil premium groups; above NA.
- VII. Overall attendance % most vulnerable groups compared to NA are pupil premium and Y8-Y11.
- VIII. Overall % persistently absence strengths are EHCP and non-pupil premium; above NA.
- IX. Overall % persistently absence most vulnerable groups are Y7-Y11.

Addressing the challenge:

- i. Working Together to Improve Attendance key priority area:

   To implement a collective and cohesive strategy across **all** services, supported by the Leader of the Council. The graduated partnership approach

to improving attendance utilising/extending the existing strategies and approaches across the system is now in DRAFT format awaiting approval. Appropriate governance arrangements have been agreed to ensure that strategies and approaches are robustly aligned and working well, driving improvements in attendance.

ii.   Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance. An officer to manage the synergy system so attendance data can be routinely and robustly interrogated to inform and evaluate work has been appointed. This will also ensure we are supporting home schools with their duty under regulation 12(1)(a) of the Education (pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006) to inform the local authority at regular intervals f these pupils not attending school regularly – this would also support our duty 'arranging education for children who cannot attend school due to health needs' (December 2023).

iii.   Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School. This forms part of the work already started by the Virtual school. Work has been completed provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting good outcomes for pupils in our care; this includes attendance. Work has also been delivered around personal education plans. Work across children's social care is underway so that all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern.

iv.   Multi-disciplinary support for families. Plans to reconfigure family hub delivery will address and support this key priority area will address signposting to services ad when not sufficient and absenteeism persists, it will allow for schools and other services to work together to provide more intensive whole family support through the Early Help model.

v.   Agreed **joint** approach for **all severely absent pupils** (those pupils missing 50% or more of school time). This may include consideration of an Educational Health and Care plan or alternative form of education. This is being actioned through the SEN action plan.

vi.   Develop a **school attendance support team** which provides core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type), to challenge, support and advise through termly target support meetings and to support and advise any lead practitioner on any attendance elements in a single plan. As above this would also ensure we are supporting home schools with their duty under regulation 12(1)(a) of the Education (pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006). This could also be part of an SLA offer to schools to provide additional advice and support to improve attendance.

vii.   Explore the concept, across all services, the expectation that if all avenues have been facilitated by schools, the local authority and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placement (e.g. on the education health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence continues as unauthorised absence, **it likely constitutes neglect.** Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding

issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment.

viii.   Continue to increase the challenge to parents / carers through the Legal Intervention Team, as shown in the increase in data below.

Legal Intervention Team Data:

Total number of prosecutions 2017 - 2023

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
154	66	84	23	59	178

36   Penalty Notices issued for Non-Attendance 2017 -2023

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 (Sept-March)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number Issued	53 (2 pending)	20	5	0	14	31
Number Paid	20	0	2	n/a	3	16
Number Unpaid	25	13	3	n/a	7	15
Withdrawn	6	7	0	n/a	0	0
Payments pending	-	-	-	-	4	0

Recommendations

37   OSC is asked to consider the position of schools in relation to:

- Ofsted inspections
- Assessment, test and exam outcomes for the academic year 2022 – 23
- School Exclusions
- Elective Home Education
- School Attendance

_____

Contacts: **M Maitland**   Ext 8622
                V Cramman
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Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee
18 January 2024

Title of Report: Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023

Purpose of the report

1   To inform senior management and councillors of the availability and sufficiency of childcare in Gateshead to fulfil the LA duties as documented within the Childcare Act 20016 (amended by the Children and Families Act 2014).

Summary of Childcare Sufficiency Report

2   There are a number of limitations in the way data in the sufficiency assessment is collected and analysed.

- Historical data (from July 2023) is used to predict future sufficiency. This may not be reliable during a period of change.
- Despite our best endeavours, not all providers submit their data, which may cause a distortion of the analysis. Securing a return from childminders is particularly challenging.
- The counting of places is key to the assessment. Places are counted in terms of "full-time places". However, most children do not attend on a full-time basis. A single place could meet the childcare needs of one, two or even three children over the course of a week.
- The measurement of vacancies has similar limitations to the measurement of places. One full-time vacancy is likely to be filled by more than one child.
- Analysis of costs is a particularly complex area. We collect the daily cost for day nurseries and holiday clubs, the sessional cost for a pre-school, breakfast or after-school club and the hourly cost for a childminder. However various other factors determine the actual fees charged, e.g. Discounts for multiple days per week, sibling discounts, staff discounts, different rates for different ages, whether parents pay or don't pay for bank holidays, provider training days, child sickness or holiday days, cost of consumables, e.g., meals or nappies included in basic fee structure or charged additionally, level of flexibility provider gives family in using funded entitlements.

Providers and Places

3   Group early years providers and the number of early education and childcare places they offer have remained stable with only very small changes in number.

4   However, the rate of decline in the number of childminders continues. In 2016, there were 131 Ofsted-registered childminders in Gateshead but by 2023, the number had fallen to 66. (A reduction of 50% over the seven-year period). This trend is reflected nationally.

5   There is no current evidence that the loss of these places has had any impact on sufficiency in Gateshead.

Occupancy/Vacancies

6   The level of vacancies of each type of childcare provider is a key indicator of sufficiency.

7   Overall, 91% of providers reported having some vacancies, compared to 86% in 2022 and 71% in 2021. These high levels of vacancies could indicate an over-supply rather than an insufficient supply of places.

8   Although most providers reported at least some vacancies, this does not mean that the childcare needs of all parents/carers can be met, especially where these needs are outside of core hours or unusual attendance patterns.

Costs

9   Most types of childcare have increased over the last year by approximately 6%. As the rate of inflation continues to be high and the level of minimum wage has significantly increased, it seems likely that there will be high percentage increases reported in the next childcare sufficiency assessment to reflect the current economic circumstances.

10   Better rates than the ones quoted in the sufficiency report may be available. For example, the cost of five days is likely to be less than five times the daily rate, and some providers offer sibling discounts, although a wide range of factors will determine the overall fees charged. (See limitations)

11   There is a wide difference between the cheapest and most expensive providers across Gateshead. For example, the cheapest day nursery costs £37.50 a day and the most expensive costs £68.00. The cheapest rate for a childminder is £3.40 and hour and the most expensive is £7.00 an hour.

Quality

12   At their most recent inspection, 94% of all Gateshead providers were judged either good, outstanding, or met.

13   There are 13 providers not yet graded by Ofsted (2 After School Clubs and 11 Childminders).

14   There was one day nursery (Busy Bees in Blaydon) that was graded as Inadequate at the time of the assessment, but this has been re-inspected and is now graded as good.

15   There was also one pre-school (Lyndhurst) graded as Inadequate at the time of the assessment, but this has been re-inspected and is now graded as Requires Improvement.

16   First inspections are usually carried out within a provider's first 30 months of operation, but there have been some delays to this timescale due to the pandemic.

Views of the Sector

17   As part of the data collection process, private, voluntary and independent providers were asked three questions.

Q1: Do you agree that there is a crisis in the Early Years sector?
A1: 90% of providers agreed and 10% disagreed.

Q2: Have you experienced recruitment difficulties in the last twelve months?
A2: 77% of providers agreed and 23% disagreed.

Q3: Have you experienced retention difficulties in the last twelve months?
A3: 51% of providers agreed, 49% disagreed and 6% were unsure.

Funded Entitlements

18   In September 2017, the government introduced the extended entitlement for eligible three- and four-year-olds. There are now three funded Early Years entitlements: -

Age	Entitlement	Eligibility Criteria
2 years	15 hours per week for eligible children	Disadvantaged / low income
3 – 4 years	15 hours per week for all children	Universal
3 – 4 years	Additional 15 hours per week for eligible children	Working parent(s)

Two-Year-Old Funded Places

Two Year Take-Up	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Gateshead (%)	58	75	78	82	82	86	77	81	77
North East (%)	65	78	81	84	82	83	75	85	85
National (%)	58	68	71	72	68	69	62	72	74

19   The above data is taken from the Statistical First Release issued by the Department of Education. The data is based on the annual Early Years census, which takes place in January each year.

20   The overall number of two-year-olds in Gateshead and the number eligible for two-year-old funding have both decreased over the last year. Analysis of children not accessing their entitlement shows relatively small numbers across all wards.

Three and Four Year Funded Places

21   All children are eligible for 15 hours per week of early education starting from the term after their third birthday and ending when move on to Reception. This is known as the Universal entitlement. Gateshead continues to enjoy a high level of take-up of the Universal entitlement.

Three & Four Year Take-Up	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Gateshead (%)	97	99	100	100	96	98	99	99	101
North East (%)	97	98	98	99	99	98	95	97	99
National (%)	95	95	94	94	94	93	88	92	94

22   Data is taken from the Statistical First Release.

23   Since September 2017, children with working parents have been able to access an additional 15 hours per week, giving a total of 30 hours. This is the extended entitlement.

24   Although we know that 1,488 Gateshead children (and 131 out of borough children) accessed the extended entitlement in July 2023, it is not known how many children are eligible.

25   Although the overall percentage of children in school nurseries is the same as the percentage in the private, voluntary and independent sector, approximately two-thirds of children accessing the only the universal entitlement are in schools (one-third in PVI). These percentages are reversed for children accessing both entitlements. (One third in schools and two-thirds in PVI).

	No of Hours in Schools	No of Hours in PVI	Total no of Hours	% Of Hours In Schools	% Of Hours In PVI
Universal Entitlement Only	15,601	9,000	24,601	63%	37%
Universal + Extended Entitlement	15,725	31,350	47,075	33%	67%
Total Hours	31,326	40,350	71,676	44%	56%

Conclusion

26   There appears to be sufficient places in Gateshead. However, this does not mean that the childcare needs of all parents/carers can be met, especially where these needs are outside of core hours or unusual attendance patterns.

Issues for consideration

*   Declining early years population. For example, between 2016 and 2022 the number of two-year-olds living in Gateshead fell from 2,289 to

1,897. A reduction of 17% over a six-year period. The wards most affected by the falling birth rate are Blaydon, Felling and Deckham.

- The number of two-year olds eligible for a funded place is reducing, partly due to the falling birth rate and partly because the government has not increased eligibility thresholds in line with inflation or increases in minimum wage. For example, most working parents are eligible because they claim Universal Credit. However, their annual net earned income must not exceed £15,400. There were 935 Gateshead children eligible for a funded two-year-old place in July 2018. There are now 706. (January 2023). A reduction of 24% over the last five years.

- Overall, 91% of providers report that they have vacancies and there is a direct correlation between low occupancy and the level of sustainability.

- The number of providers and the number of places on offer have generally remained stable with only relatively small changes. However, the number of childminders continues to decline. From July 2016 to July 2023, the number of childminders has reduced by 50%.

- Media articles frequently refer to a national crisis in the Early Years sector. In Gateshead, providers report that agencies are unable to provide supply staff, vacancies are not able to be filled and people with lower levels of skills and experience are being appointed into leadership roles. It seems likely that this will ultimately have a detrimental effect on quality. 90% of Gateshead's group childcare providers agreed that there was a crisis within Early Years, 77% agreed that there was a staff recruitment crisis and 51% agreed that there was a staff retention crisis.

Local Authority Response to Issues

27   There is little that a local authority can do to address the falling birth rate or increase the number of families eligible for a funded place as the eligibility criteria is set by government.

28   The current high levels of vacancies will provide some of the flexibility needed to cope with the expansion of the funded entitlements from April 2024 onwards.   The increase in funded entitlements will help providers to become more sustainable, as long as the funding rates are comparable to the rates charged to parents.

29   The fall in the number of registered childminders continues to be a problem in Gateshead and nationally. We are trialling a Service Level Agreement for Childminders (similar to the SLA we already have for group providers) which we hope will lead to childminders feel more supported and hence improve retention.We are working with the Family learning Service to develop a childminder training offer and Family Hubs to support Childminder Networks.

30   In recognition of the fall in the number of childminders nationally, the government have introduced grants for childminders registered since March

2023. £600 for childminders registering with Ofsted and £1,200 for childminders registering with a childminder agency.

Communications Implications

31   Once approved, the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023 will be made available to the public on Gateshead Council's website.

Recommendations

32   OSC Families are recommended to note:

    (a) The contents of this report and the attached Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023.
    (b) Approve the publication of the Sufficiency Report on Gateshead Council's website.
    (c) Agree to bring the report to the attention of Councillors and Portfolio Holders.

Consultees:

The following officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report:

Michael Ramm (Office of the Chief Executive, Research and Intelligence) for population and economic data.

Primary schools, independent schools and private, voluntary and independent childcare providers.

Contact: Judith Reay   **Ext: 8695**

SFVDAA-44932

Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: Adoption Report 2022/2023

REPORT OF: Victoria Mckay, Practice Lead Safeguarding and Care Planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken for children with plans of adoption within Gateshead Local Authority.
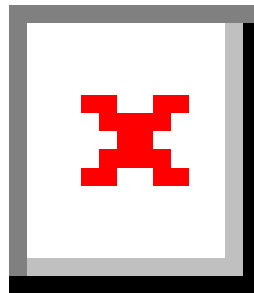
Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the practice and delivery of adoption services in Gateshead Council.

Background

2. The Local Authority is responsible for securing permanency for those children who, for reasons of their safety and welfare are unable to live within their birth families and whose needs are such that adoption has been judged to be the best permanency option for those children.

    • Policy Background:
    • 1989 Children Act
    • Adoption Acts 2002, 2014 & 2017

- Public Law Outline (2014)
- Children & Families Act (2014)

Proposal

3.   It is proposed that the Local Authority continue to work towards adoption as the best outcome for some children for whom we act as corporate parents.

Recommendations

4.   The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to consider this report and make any recommendations for action as judged necessary.

Adoption in Gateshead 2022 – 2023

Background

5.   Adoption is the legal process in which the parental responsibility (PR) for a child is transferred from their birth parent or other persons with PR to the adopters.

6.   Adopt North East, the Regional Adoption Agency responsible for adoption services on behalf of Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Council. This regional adoption agency has been created in response to the legal requirement that the authorities regionalise their adoption services. Adopt North East replaced the council's own adoption team in December 2018.

7.   The Safeguarding and Care Planning Service is responsible for intervening to safeguard children, assessing families, and making decisions about whether adoption is the most suitable plan for permanency if the child cannot be cared for safely and appropriately within their family of birth.

8.   All decisions about adoption are ratified by Laurie Thompson, Practice Lead and/or the Assistant Strategic Director for Children and Families and the Family Court makes the ultimate decision if a child should be placed for adoption by the making of a Placement Order. The child is then freed for adoption and can be matched with adopters who thereafter can apply for an Adoption Order once the child has been in their care for ten weeks or more.

9.   Until the Adoption Order has been made, the child remains the responsibility of the local authority and is deemed a Cared for Child.

10. In making the decision about whether the child should be adopted, social workers and the courts must satisfy themselves that "nothing else will do" and that all avenues have been explored with regards to that child being cared for by someone in their birth family network.

Performance

11. The reporting period 2022/2023 represents the fourth full year of operation by Adopt North East.

12. Performance information for 2022/2023 evidences a consistent level of demand for forever families. This is consistent with the partnership's higher than national average children in care population. Unfortunately, over the year such robust demand for adoptive placements has not been matched by stable or increasing supply of available adopters. In 2022/2023 outturn represents the lowest number of applications to adopt received by the agency since it started. The links between adoption, cost of living crisis, employment and lifestyle changes since COVID19 has undoubtedly suppressed interest in adopting.

13. The reporting period between 01.04.2022 to 31.03.2023 summaries Adopt North East overall performance:

    - Match 103 children
    - Placed 103 children, 19 of which were Early Permanence Placements
    - Supported 105 children to be adopted
    - Received 366 contacts about becoming and adopter
    - Approved 59 adopters

Statistical Information specific to Gateshead

14. Table 1: The number of children with a plan of adoption referred by Gateshead's Safeguarding and Care Planning Service to Adopt North East in 2020/2021, 2021/22, 2022/23. Gateshead is the second highest referring Local Authority to Adopt North East.

Year	The number of children with a plan of adoption referred by Gateshead's Safeguarding and Care Planning Service to Adopt North East
2020 - 2021	21
2021 - 2022	25
2022 - 2023	28

15. Table 2: The number of children for whom a Placement Order was made in, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23. Gateshead is the second highest Local Authority from the five Local Authorities in partnership with Adopt North East.

Year	The number of children for whom a Placement Order was made
2020 - 2021	27
2021 – 2022	25

| 2022 – 2023 | 27 |

16. Table 3: The number of children matched with adopters in, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23. Gateshead is the second highest Local Authority from the five Local Authorities in partnership with Adopt North East

Year	The number of children matched with adopters
2020 - 2021	20
2021 – 2022	21
2022 – 2023	29

17. In 2022/2023 the number of children with a plan of adoption reversed was one. The reason for reversal was that maternal grandparents presented late (at the Final Hearing) expressing a wish to care for their grandchild. The plan for this child was a Care Order and for further assessments of grandparents. This evidences that Gateshead is actively reviewing permanency decisions in the best interests of children.

18. In 2022/2023, there have been 6 children placed in Foster to Adopt or Early Permanence placements. Gateshead is the highest Local Authority from the five Local Authorities in partnership with Adopt North East.

19. When a child who has been placed with an adoptive family needs to be removed as the adoptive family no longer wish to care for them or the adopters are struggling to meet the needs of the child and the local authority intervene and remove the child, this is referred to as an adoption breakdown. In Gateshead there has been 1 adoption breakdown's in 2022/2023. Fortunately for the child, their previous foster carers were available, and the child was returned to their care. The foster carers daughter is currently being assessed as adoptive parents for the child. This evidences that assessments of the child's needs and matching processes have been thorough and accurate.

Peer Review

20. In 2022/2023 Adopt North East commissioned a Peer Review from the Local Government Association (LGA).

21. In November 2022, a small team of experts in adoption led by an experienced ex-Director of Children's Services spent three days with Adopt North East and partners.

22. Findings from peer team found strong adoption services with some areas of development. Strong workforce with improving performance with developments of showing a shared culture across the wider partnership. There was nine formal recommendations all of which were accepted by the

agency and have been embedded into their Self Assessment and forward strategic plan.

Recommendations

23. It is recommended that Corporate Parenting Board Members:

(i) note and comment on the information provided in the report

CONTACT:
Victoria Mckay, Practice Lead for Safeguarding and Care Planning Services.

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Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Work Programme 2023-24

REPORT OF: **Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive**
                             Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance

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Summary

To provide details on development of the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) and the provisional work programme for Families OSC for the municipal year 2023-24.

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Development of 2023-24 Work Programme

1. Every year each Overview and Scrutiny Committee draws up a work programme based on the Council's policy framework which is then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process.

2. The Committee's work programme is a rolling programme which sets the agenda for its meetings. It is the means by which it can address the interests of the local community, focus on improving services and seek to reduce inequalities in service provision and access to services.

3. OSC members have been involved, through consultation, in shaping the focus of the work of specific OSCs and have been provided with an opportunity to comment on the emerging themes at the April 2023 OSC meetings. The emerging themes have taken account of the need to support the Council's Thrive agenda and add value, the Council's Performance Framework; the Gateshead Strategic Needs Assessment and the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

4. Subsequently, in line with usual practice, partner organisations have been consulted on the themes identified through consultation with members and have indicated that they are supportive of the emerging themes overall. Partners have also put forward some suggested areas for scrutiny for specific OSCs as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

5. The proposed 2023/24 work programme (attached at Appendix 1) remains provisional as:-
   - Cabinet may wish to refer further issues to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for further consideration.
   - It does not take account of new policy issues which may be identified during the year, which Cabinet may wish to refer to Overview and Scrutiny; and
   - It does not include issues identified by members of committees on an ongoing basis during the year as a result of scrutiny decisions, call in and councillor call for action.

Recommendations

6. The Committee is asked to:-

    a)   Note the information contained in the annual work programme report and provide any comments.

    b)   Note that further reports will be brought to the Committee to identify any additional issues which the Committee may be asked to consider.

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Contact: Grace Anderson   **Email**:   graceanderson@gateshead.gov.uk

Families OSC Work Programme 2023-24	
15 June 2023	• Trauma Informed Care Report • Performance Management and Improvement Framework – Year End Performance 2022-23 • Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – Plans and Emerging Priorities • LADO Annual Report • Corporate Parenting Board Annual Update • Work Programme
7 September 2023	• Outcome of Youth Justice Service Inspection with Action Plan • Social Services Annual Report on Complaints and Representations – Children • Progress on delivering Early Help and Prevention Strategy *(to include Family Hub development; delivery of Healthy Child Programme and Baby Box scheme)* • Gateshead's Children and Young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing local transformation plan 2023/24 update • Work Programme
19 October 2023 (5.30pm)	• Update on support to vulnerable adolescents *(to include those missing and exploited / on the edge of Care – impact of strategies to reduce demand for children entering care)* • Trauma Informed Team Update • Young Ambassadors (Care Leavers) • Preventing Homelessness for Young People • Progress Update on delivery of SEND Strategy *(to include progress against all 4 priorities; SEND tribunal data; pathways into EET for those with SEND)* • Work Programme
30 November 2023	• Performance Management and Improvement Framework – Six Month Update – 2023-24 • Delivery of Therapy Services for children - impact and outcomes • Overview of delivery of mental health services for children and young people *(to include the joint report for new initiatives in Gateshead looking at children's mental health)* • Work Programme
18 January 2024	• Schools Performance Overview Report *(including attendance, attainment and exclusion data; ofsted school outcomes)* • Early Years Sufficiency • Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report • Work Programme
7 March 2024	• Annual Progress Update on Children's Social Care Improvement Plan

	• Preventing Youth Crime and Serious Violence *(invite HEHC OSC to jointly look at this)* • Work Programme
18 April 2024	• Response to Child Poverty in Gateshead • Health Service support in schools for children with chronic health conditions / childhood allergies *(to include trends, treatment, management in schools)* • Work Programme