



FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 5 September 2024 at 1.30 pm in the Bridges Room - Civic Centre

From the Chief Executive, Dale Owens

Item	Business
1	Apologies for absence
2	Minutes of last meeting (Pages 3 - 6) The Committee is asked to approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on Thursday 20 th June 2024.
3	Declarations of Interest Committee members to declare an interest in any particular agenda item where applicable.
4	Gateshead's Children and Young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing local transformation plan – A report by Angela Kumar (Pages 7 - 14)
5	Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – A report by Heather Pearson (Pages 15 - 46)
6	Progress Update on delivery of SEND Strategy – A report by Suzanne Dunn (Pages 47 - 58)
7	Social Services Annual Report on Complaints and Representations – Children – A report by Alison Routledge (Pages 59 - 78)
8	Work Programme (Pages 79 - 84)
9	Any other business
10	Date of the next meeting The next Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on Thursday 17 th October 2024, 17:00 in the Bridges room.

Contact: Joshua Brown - Democratic Services Officer, Tel: 0191 433 4636, Email: democraticserviceteam@gateshead.gov.uk, Tel: , Date: Wednesday, 28 August 2024

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FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2024

Present: Councillor(s): J Green (Chair), P Burns (Vice Chair), B Clelland, L-A Moir, D Weatherley, I Patterson, P Craig, K McCartney.

Apologies: Councillor(s): M Ord, H Kelly, A Ord, J Mohammed, E McMaster, K Henderson, R Hart.

135 **Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held of 18 April 2024 were approved as an accurate record with no matters arising.

136 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

137 **Performance Management & Improvement Framework - Year End Performance 2023/24 - Richard Hall/Chloe Finn**

Purpose of the Performance Management and Improvement Framework

1. The Performance Management and Improvement Framework (PMIF) enables the Council to know how it is delivering against the Thrive agenda. It has a clear focus on priorities, delivery, measurement, and analysis of impact. It is based on Thrive and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and incorporates an organisational 'health check' balanced scorecard.

The report was presented. Over the coming twelve-month period the current PMIF will undergo a review to ensure that the information provided by the framework continues to add value to decision making process and reflects advancements in technology and the introduction of the Office for Local Government.

Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- Comment on the year-end report at Appendix 1 and identify any areas for further scrutiny.
- Recommend the performance report to Cabinet for consideration in July 2024.

The committee raised a question in relation to 'School readiness: % of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception' and why it is at a baseline of 73.4% and not 100%. This was addressed by the explanation that this baseline is dependent on achieving a good foundation of development which may not always be attainable due to the requirement of SEND etc. Benchmarking is required and opportunities are needed by nurseries to build on foundations of children going into primary school. The impact of the COVID pandemic was raised and the affects it had in relation to children's experiences such as socialising.

Noted – Supplementary information is required to track the progress of school readiness.

The committee clarified the council's level of control over aspects such as exclusions and the ability to influence the related figures. Suzanne Dunn, Service Director of Education, Schools and Inclusion, works closely with academies in offering support and involvement in what is wanted to be seen in terms of foundation levels, education and attendance.

The committee raised the need to include schools in need of improvement within the scope of the committee. The School Improvement Service is managed through the Council via trade services. The ambition is for all children to attend good or outstanding schools. The School Improvement Service is due to be discussed in future Families OSC.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report and recommendations.

138 LADO Annual Report - Sharon Davey/Heather Jenkins

Purpose of the Report

1. To update on the progress from LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) throughout the year of 2023/2024.
2. Collate themes and learning for the service and partners for 2024/2025.

The report was presented. Areas of success were discussed, highlighting the increase of positive activity reflecting the ongoing work as detailed on p.3 of the report.

There has been an increase in referrals from schools and children's homes due to increased volume of awareness sessions, an improved referral process and ongoing training.

Timeliness of LADO meetings has improved from 72% to 90%.

In response to training sessions and working with the LADO, positive feedback has been received from professionals writing in to praise the ongoing work and improvements. This feedback was also presented to the committee.

The ongoing work moves onwards to strengthen training and guidance to be applied in service and across the entire partnership.

Addressing the question asking if there is any geographic area of concern, it was clarified that the LADO's services are provided across the region to ensure appropriate information is communicate effectively via local authorities.

139 Corporate Parenting Board Annual Update - Lesley Thompson/Josh Barr

The role of the board is to consistently challenge and ask:

- If this were my child, would it be good enough for them?
- If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?
- How could I make it even better?

The following four themes of the report were presented and detailed to the committee.

- Theme 1: How are we supporting children and young people to remain safely at home with families/extended families; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 2: How are we meeting children's needs and improving outcomes; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 3: How are we ensuring that there are sufficient homes for our children in care and care experienced young people; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?
- Theme 4: How are we improving outcomes for care experienced young people; what is the evidence; what progress are we making and what are the outcomes?

In addressing the question relating to the number of foster carers being recruited, the committee discussed kinship and how outcomes are statistically better with family involvement

due to the level of intervention required. Family Hubs are being used for this process. The advisory group will ascertain what level of training is required with kinship carers available to support and train.

The region as a whole is working to recruit foster carers with Gateshead Councils support package being available to all across the region. There is a positive drive to recruit younger carers who have the opportunity to see the role as a career.

Kinship care sees Gateshead Council provide a dedicated team that can support carers, resulting in far fewer breakdowns of extended family arrangements.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report.

140 Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report - Sharon Davey/Heather Jenkins

Purpose of the Report

1. To update on the progress from IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) Service throughout the year of 2023/2024.
2. Collate themes and learning for the service and partners for 2024/2025.

The above report was delivered to the committee.

The IRO service has delivered narrative training – ‘writing with and for the child’ – to promote the voices of children and families, therefore, exposing learning opportunities to improve the service. This has been well received and is now considered a strength of the service.

Training is being delivered to the wider service to ensure strengths and tools of the service are provided and utilised at the earliest opportunity.

Quality Assurance is being addressed regarding systemic and resource issues in order to deliver the best outcome for children and young people. A Quality Assurance clinic has been set up to improve the service going forward - Strategic Quality Assurance Group (SQAG).

Achievements from report were highlighted such as the good feedback received from the IRO service.

The service continues to upskill IRO's in relation to good practice, staying current both regionally and nationally.

Referencing Para. 10, p.78 of the report, the committee discussed children's views and concerns with attendance of reviews. It was discussed that it would be helpful to clarify actual numbers of children, as opposed to percentages. Furthermore, it was clarified that children might not attend to speak for themselves due to feeling nervous etc, however, the advocacy service available is offered to all children. Some children prefer to hold their own presentation or play games to communicate. To open up in communication, children are encouraged and facilitated to do so in whatever way they choose. Family are encouraged too, as they are key support for their child.

All staff at the conferences have iPad's to anonymously submit details should anyone need technology related support. Paper forms are also available to gain the views of parents and children. These packs are in the process of being reviewed to ensure this key information is obtained at the soonest opportunity and in the best way.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above report.

141 Work Programme 2024/25 - Emma Fagan

Summary

This report details the draft work programme for the Families OSC for the 2024-25 municipal year and sets out the role and remit of the Committee.

Recommendations

1. The Committee is asked to:-
 - a) Approve the draft work programme as set out at Appendix 1; and
 - b) Highlight any additional priority areas that Members feel it is important for the Committee to consider.

The principles at centre of governance and scrutiny were clarified – Para. 10 covers Statutory Guidance for scrutiny activity.

The remit of the committee, as set out in constitution, was clarified.

RESOLVED

The committee noted and agreed the above Terms of Reference, Work Programme and recommendations.

142 Any other business

It was clarified that the Work Programme is scheduled to discuss the School Improvement Service.

No further business.

Date and time of the next meeting

The next Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on 5th September 2024, 1.30pm in the Bridges room, Gateshead Civic Centre.

Chairman at the meeting on
Thursday, 20 June 2024



**North East and
North Cumbria**

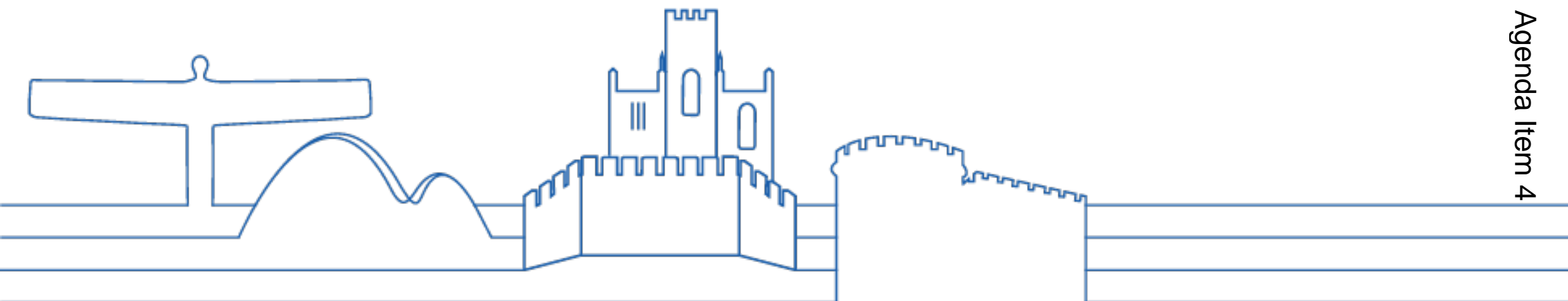
Children & Young People's Mental Health Long Term Transformation Plan for 2023-24

Health and Wellbeing Board – Friday 6th September 2024

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**Angela Kumar – Head of Strategic Commissioning
Newcastle/Gateshead LDT**

Agenda Item 4



1.1 - To transform the model for CYP MH and Emotional Wellbeing Support across Gateshead which includes:

- Improved access and timely support
- Implementation of best practice at key transition points in a young person's life.
- Improved Alternative to Crisis & Crisis offer

What we've delivered

- Undertaken a full review and evaluation of the SPA for Getting Help and Getting More Help Services
- Ensure a holistic approach to support where a person has co-existing physical health conditions (asthma, epilepsy, obesity, deafness) for CYP
- Ensure physical health pathways are inclusive for children and young people with a learning disability
- Develop a multi-agency plan for Family Hubs and Best Start for Life (3-year programme) which includes a mental health and emotional wellbeing offer for CYP and families.
- Demonstrate improvements to eating disorder services to promote early intervention and avoidable hospital admissions and how funding is spent to meet the needs of Gateshead children and young people
- Increasing access to specialist community Peri-natal MH (PMH) services and extending community services from preconception to 24 months after birth
- Improved access for young women from groups who are currently under-represented in services

What's still to do

- Join up the SPA with other system provision to improve the support to CYP & families
- Developing a CYP crisis offer
- Implement best practice regarding transition from children's mental health services to adult mental health services within the new service model
- Improve waiting times for CYP being referred for ADHD assessment
- Have a clear Universal offer for all children of school age.

2.1 - To further develop the Mental Health Teams in schools service model and improve partnership working and whole system service development.

What we've delivered –

- Integrate the MHST Offer alongside the wider system offer
- Provide training to all identified Senior MH leads in schools

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What's still to do –

- Develop a robust system offer of support in and around the school which sees MHST as part of that offer

3.1 – To improve access to CYP IAPT Programme

What we've delivered –

- Develop an early intervention mental health offer of support, particularly targeted at children & young people who do not qualify for secondary care intervention

Whats still to do and build on

- Proactive offer to support cohorts and community of CYP e.g knife crime, ASB, ADHD – to create a positive emotional approach.

4.1 – Youth Justice Service

What we've delivered –

- Work with partners to implement recommendations of Youth Justice Inspection 2023 to ensure quick access to mental health and speech and language services

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What still needs to be done.

- Embed a wider support offer, not always a clinical intervention – alternative community programmes which may include Arts, Music and Support.

5.1 - To embed Trauma Informed care across Gateshead through the design, launch and evaluation of a pilot service for 5-25yrs

- What we've delivered –

Procurement of a Trauma Informed Care Service of which 18 months of data collection will follow which is linked to the Vanguard, then evaluate the model and see if it is right for Gateshead.

What still needs to be done

- The system will need to secure funding.



GATESHEAD
**safeguarding
children**
partnership

Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/24

Contents



- Our commitment to safeguarding children in Gateshead
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- Analysis from learning reviews
- Multi-agency audits
- What's next

GSCP - Our Commitment to Safeguarding Children in Gateshead

We are proud to present this year's Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) Annual Report. The content of this report outlines our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our children and young people in Gateshead. It reflects the collective work we carried out through the partnership in relation to our agreed plans and priorities, action that we took, successes, challenges and concludes with an outline of our plans for the future.

Over the course of 2023/24 we have worked together to strengthen and develop our practice. This included asking our Scrutineer to conduct a formal review of our arrangements, more of which is outlined later in this report. The review work has led to us reshaping our governance arrangements, increasing our collaborative approach with wider partnerships and boards and the development of workstreams in relation to our priorities and areas of challenge.

The last year has seen organisational restructuring within two of our statutory organisations as well as developments to the partnership itself.

Northumbria Police have recently moved to a six-area command operating model which means that Gateshead is now a standalone area command with the Chief Superintendent for Gateshead now being the Police representative at the Executive Board. This allows sole focus on Gateshead as a community and a locality approach with multi agency relationships that focus on what's important for Gateshead. This model continues to have the support of the force safeguarding leads.

A full review of the operating model and staffing structure for the North-East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) has taken place across 2023-2024 with the new arrangements in place from 1st April 2024. ICB specialist safeguarding and cared for staff are now organised into six new teams across the North-East and North Cumbria, with a new post of Director of Safeguarding. Gateshead has benefitted from maintaining consistent representation within the 'Gateshead and Newcastle' team.

Working together with us are our wide number of relevant agencies who are well represented within our partnership arrangements. Our wider partners work with us to understand what impacts the safeguarding of children and young people in Gateshead, what needs to be done, how we can work together to deliver positive change and help us monitor that our work makes a difference.

The report also highlights the work we have undertaken to ensure that information from children, young people and families about our services and what we do shapes future activity, and this has included the direct involvement of Gateshead Council Young Ambassadors in this year's work. We aim to strengthen and widen our work with children and young people to assist in the development of safeguarding arrangements in Gateshead over 2024/25.

Our dedication and commitment to collectively working together to safeguard the children and young people in Gateshead remains unwavering and our ability to be agile in our work, addressing new challenges or directions of policy alongside our planned work programme is a great strength of our partnership approach to keeping children safe.



Paul Stewart
•Chief Superintendent Paul Stewart – Northumbria Police Area Commander for Gateshead
•Northumbria Police



Helen Fergusson
•Strategic Director Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
•Gateshead Council



Richard Scott
•Director of Nursing (North)
•North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

GSCP - Independent Chair and Scrutineer View

This is my second year as Independent Chair and Scrutineer in Gateshead. This has been a busy year for the statutory partners and all organisations who work with children and young people. The demand for service support to families increases year on year and I start my report by thanking all those who have worked hard over the course of the year to ensure that children, young people and families in Gateshead receive the support and care they need.

In relation to the work of the partnership, this year has involved a review of the arrangements which was undertaken, and further work required as a result of the new Working Together 2023 requirements.

During 2023 the leads for police, the ICB and local authority have shown strong leadership to the partnership and worked well together as an Executive group to comply with statutory obligations and statutory guidance. In addition to that however, in my role as scrutineer, I observed a clear and collective mission to identify the best practice that will work in Gateshead to deliver services that keep children and young people safe across Gateshead. As part of this drive, the Executive leads requested a full review of the existing safeguarding arrangements that included the six key areas that were the subject of scrutiny (in line with the Pearce, Stratton, Parker and Thorpe 2022 national review of safeguarding children arrangements). These were – Leadership, Engagement of Relevant Agencies, Outcomes for Children and Young People, Quality Assurance and Information Sharing, Learning from Local and National Reviews and Research and Multi-agency Training and Workforce Development.

Over the course of some months partnership development sessions took place, and all safeguarding partners were offered meetings to provide feedback on the strengths and areas for development. A significant number of leaders, partners and chairs of other partnership groups contributed to the review and provided some insightful feedback that shaped our new model of working.

Importantly the review considered feedback that we had received from children and young people about service delivery in Gateshead and included meetings with the Gateshead Council Young Ambassadors who provided valuable information gathered from the work with young people across Gateshead that they are engaged in. The review also scrutinised partnership policies and procedures and paperwork used, together with identifying areas of national good practice. All of this culminated in a report for the statutory partner leads that outlined the findings and recommendations that would strengthen the arrangements and they shared the report with the wider partnership who collectively agreed the recommendations.

The transition to a new structure and new way of working is underway. There has been a slight but understandable delay to the implementation of some of the recommendations due to the publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 which was published in December 2023. This requires some changes to be implemented by December 2024 and Gateshead partnership are working through this now through a series of development sessions to agree how the key changes will be delivered.

In addition to the review of the arrangements, there has been considerable work undertaken by the statutory partners and wider organisations to implement changes to improve how services safeguard children. This report sets out some of the work delivered over the course of the year including work undertaken in relation to priority areas of work.

The report concludes with the priorities set for 2024/25 and outlines the new model for working - one focusing on a learning cycle that delivers young people and practitioner involvement in the learning and development work of the partnership. This will be supported by the introduction of an assurance model and a strengthened performance management framework.

Heather Pearson, Independent Chair and Scrutineer



GSCP - What is Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP)?

The government document “*Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018*” has been the document that all partnerships across England and Wales has used to develop local arrangements – these are known as Multi-Agency Safeguarding arrangements (MASA for short). The government document outlines legal requirements and government guidance in relation to how we should work locally to keep children safe. In each area the police, integrated care board (ICB) and local authority are jointly responsible for ensuring that the legal requirements and guidance within this document are used to develop strong ways of working that protect and promote the welfare of children, make sure that local services are effective, that we listen to children and young people’s views and use this to develop practice, and we consider what has worked well and what could be done differently through reviewing and learning from what we do. The document further advises other agencies and organisations of their responsibility to consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children when carrying out their work, and, to work with the police, integrated care board and local authority as a partnership. This includes schools, colleges and other education providers have a key role in safeguarding children too.

In Gateshead we have written our MASA arrangements and they are published on our GSCP website. Our MASA document sets out how we ensure that we use the legal requirements and national guidance to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Gateshead. You can access the document by clicking the below link:

[Gateshead Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

During 2023/24 we have used the above information to keep up to date with what is required nationally, as well as developing what we agree is required in Gateshead. In December 2023 the government published an updated version of the document “*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*”. The latest version provides new guidance and we are working through the changes and will publish an updated MASA document on our website in December 2024 that will outline some new ways of working. Any new changes will only strengthen our work to keep children safe.

Our safeguarding arrangements are designed to offer us the chance to work more effectively and with joint purpose to protect children and young people and support those who most need our help into adulthood.

GSCP – What information tells us

Gateshead is located on the southern bank of the river Tyne, opposite Newcastle upon Tyne to the north, and bordering County Durham to the south, Northumberland to the west and South Tyneside/Sunderland to the east. The borough stretches almost 13 miles along the south bank of the river Tyne and covers 55 square miles, making it the largest of the five Tyne and Wear authorities. It is a unitary authority with a population of 197,722.

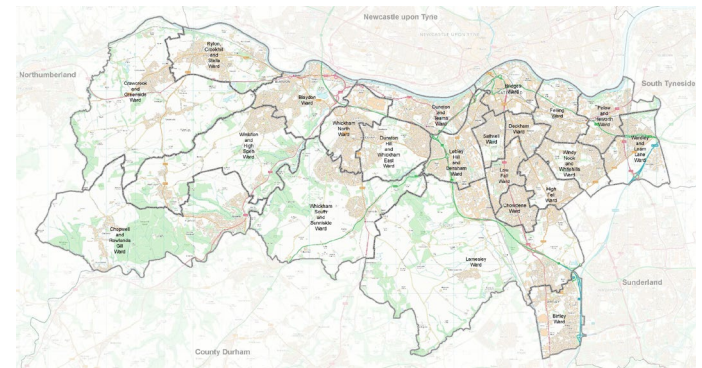
In Gateshead, socio-economic inequalities exist as illustrated by the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (CLG) and Gateshead is the 47th most deprived of 317 local authorities in England with 21 areas which fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England, (16% of the population). Much of this deprivation is based within the central and eastern urban areas of the borough. Whilst there has been a decrease of children under 16 in Gateshead who live in relative poverty of 7.5% since 2018/19, this figure still stands at 19.6% and the proportion of children entitled to free school meals is 29.06%

17.48% of pupils in Gateshead schools identify as having a minority ethnic background. The single largest ethnic group (after White British) is White Eastern European, followed by Other Ethnic Group and then Mixed White and Asian. Languages other than English are spoken as a first language by 11.64% (3243 pupils)

Information from the office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that between 2011 and 2022 there has been an increase in the number of people who are aged over 65 whilst over the same period the number of younger people has reduced :

- aged 0-24 of -6.6% (-3,770 people) and now stands at 56,045 (28.3% of the whole population)
- aged 25-44 of -5.0% (-2,710 people).

We know that whilst the number of children and young people in Gateshead has reduced the demand for services in support of the young people living in Gateshead has increased.



GSCP – What information tells us (March 23 – April 24)

No. of children in receipt of **early help** – 947 in March 2024 (a decrease from 978 in March 2023)

No. of **children in need** – 792 in March 2024 (a slight increase from 766 in March 2023)

1689 referrals received by CSC

17.9% decrease (368) compared to the previous 12 months

19.6% decrease in rate of referral to 429.6 per 10,000 (stat neighbour average 636)

18.8% Repeat Referrals

- 528 **children were in care** in this period; an increase of 0.2% (1) on the same period 12 months ago
- This was however a decrease in the rate of children in care to 134.3 per 10,000 (stat neighbour av. 105)
- Most children remain in Gateshead Council Placements, better than comparator authorities
- 73.6% of children in long term stable placements this is an increase from last year (63.0%)
- 9% increase (17) in children leaving care compared to last year

330 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan (new). 10% increase (30 more) than the previous 12 months
21% made subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time, less than last year (32%) and 4% made subject to second plan within 12 months, decrease compared to last year (7%) but this is still higher than our statistical neighbours and so Child Protection was chosen as one of the GSCP priorities. This is detailed later in this report.

238 children were on child protection plans during the time (ongoing). 17.8% increase (36) compared to last year. 15.4% increase in rate to 60.5 per 10,000 (stat neighbour average 61)

Emotional Abuse is the main reason for child protection plans

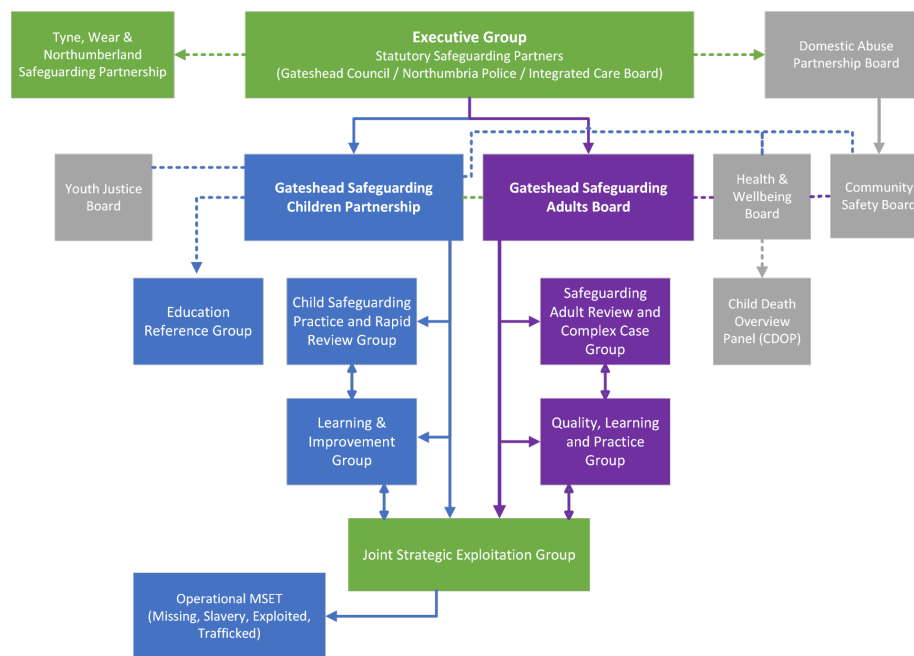
First time entrants into YJS has remained static since March 2023 at 24 (FTE). This equates to 144 (FTE) per 100,000 population

GSCP – How do we work together?

During 2023/24 we worked together using the below model of meetings. We linked in with other regional and Gateshead wide partnerships and boards in relation to work that we need to work together on (for example we ensured that the Domestic Abuse Partnership considered the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people). We talk about this later in the report. Our Executive Group of police, ICB and Local Authority leads overseas the work of the partnership and work is delivered through subgroups who meet regularly. The subgroups involve police, ICB and local authority and wider partner members. This model makes sure that we work collectively on our priority work and develop and improve practice. The work undertaken over the course of the year is discussed later in the report.

As mentioned earlier, over the course of 2023/24 we have undertaken a review of the model we use and as a result of that review, and required change outlined in the new Working Together guidance we have made some changes to the way we work. The new model for working is outlined at the end of the report when we talk about what we intend to do over the next 12 months.

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GSCP - How do we work together?

Our Executive Group is Chaired by our Independent Chair and Scrutineer and our police, ICB and local authority leads meet regularly to make sure that we comply with the legal requirements and national guidance. This meeting is important as they provide leadership, set direction and what is important that we do to make sure children in Gateshead are safe and well.

Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) meeting involves police, ICB and local authority leads meeting with wider partner leads from other services and organisations in Gateshead to ensure that all organisations and staff in Gateshead are focused on keeping children and young people safe and well. We agree and report on priority work, identify areas where we work well and where we need to improve, we also look at things that might impact on children and young people in Gateshead or increases risk. An example of this would be if we heard that children in Gateshead were worried about violent crime – we would work together to ensure children were provided information that could make them feel safer and keep them safe. The meeting brings organisations together at both a strategic and operational level to:

- deliver a focused, co-ordinated response
- innovate system change
- deliver efficiencies
- support effective multi-agency practice

Throughout 2023/24 the Partnership has used the sub-groups to undertake specific work. The sub-groups act on behalf of the Gateshead Safeguarding Partners to assist them to fulfil their responsibilities under the under the [Children Act 2004](#), [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#) and the statutory guidance [Working Together](#).

The Safeguarding Partners have sub-group chairs who support the work of the groups and report on plans and progress achieved. Regular updates are provided to the GSCP meeting and the Business Manager updates.

Towards the end of 23/24, a new 'Safeguarding Partnership' newsletter was launched. Shared with all partners and made publicly available, this quarterly newsletter enables a far wider audience to receive important updates on the work of the partnerships.

GSCP – Our People and Budget

The GSCP have a full time Business Manager who co-ordinates the work of the partnership on behalf of the three statutory partners. During June 2023 a Business Administrator was also appointed to work part time for GSCP. The Business Manager works closely with the Business Managers for Safeguarding Adults and Community Safety partnerships in Gateshead. They do further collaborative work with regional and national colleagues. This way we ensure that we develop ways of working that are joined up and consider wider safeguarding concerns. It also means that we can share good practice in Gateshead and learn from others.

The GSCP budget is set by the police, ICB and local authority leads and spending is monitored throughout the year. The budget is reviewed and set on a yearly basis. Working Together 2023 has identified that the funding should be equitable between the three partners and we are reviewing our budget for 2025/26. The majority of the expenditure relates to staffing the partnership.

Partner contributions	2023/24 (£)
Local Authority	73,086
Health	28,688
Police	12,167
Probation	2,234
Total Contributions	116,175

GSCP – Our Priority Work for 23 / 24

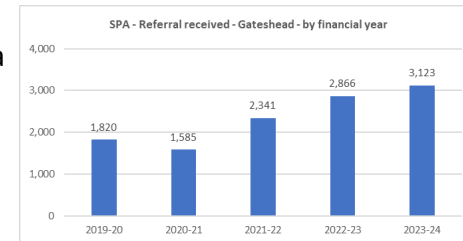
A development session with all partners, relevant agencies and young people was held at the end of 2022/23 to identify priorities for the partnership. As a result, we agreed the following four areas as areas of concern for children and young people:

1) Child Protection - improving CP conferences and plans

Why did we choose this? Information showed us that in 23/24 Gateshead 332 Child Protection Plans were started. This is higher than England and our Statistical Neighbours, and higher than the rate in 22/23. Within this, 4% have had a previous plan within 12 months, 12% within 2 years and 20% ever.

2) Mental Health - ensuring children get access to the right support at the right time

Why did we choose this? Young people in Gateshead were clear that support for mental health needs was a key concern across the board. This corresponded with information that showed a growing increase in referrals into services in Gateshead.



3) Domestic Abuse - the impact of this on children and young people

Why did we choose this? Domestic abuse is prevalent in cases dealt with by Children's Services – in terms of the impact of domestic abuse in the household and also for young people directly affected. Domestic Abuse data for 23/24 shows that 1553 referrals (67.7%) stated there was a child(ren) involved / within the household.

4) Serious Youth Violence – and the fear of this

Why did we choose this? During 2022/23 there was a 9% increase in serious violence in Gateshead. The Northumbria Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) Young Person's Survey on Knife Crime and Feelings of Safety reported that they mostly feel safe during the day but feelings of safety dropped significantly after dark due to seeing gang activity or large group gatherings, alcohol and drugs, unlit areas of local streets, parks and woods, ASB and the fear of other young people carrying knives.

Priority Action 1: Child Protection Conferences and Plans

In June 2023 the GSCP held a session to understand Child Protection performance information. In addition to the work by Children's Social Care to address this, a **multi-agency deep dive audit** was undertaken to understand practice. This took place in September 2023 and a number of recommendations were made to improve the process.

A multi-agency task and finish group was established to take forward the actions.

66% of children told us their CP review meeting was 'friendly' but it could be made better by 'having chocolate' and 'being made more fun'.

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The new improved partnership CP training received fantastic feedback. One Police officer said it made them "Think more about the way I, as a professional, present in the conference and how to share information with parents"

What has been the impact?

Increasing knowledge and confidence of professionals attending conferences was identified as key to improving the quality of plans and core groups. Key actions undertaken to address this has included:

- Developing and sharing an agreed report format for individual agencies.
- Reviewing the training offer. To date two sessions in the new format have been delivered to a wide variety of partners. Feedback is "excellent" with staff saying that they leave feeling more confident and informed.
- The formal escalation procedure has been reviewed and streamlined. Guidance has been developed to support partners, who requested a "dummies guide" to underpin the training.

By April 2023, Repeat Child Protection Plans were at 29.5% this then reduced to an average of 17% in the first 6 months of 2024 calendar year. There has been a focus on ensuring at every delisting conference a contingency plan is agreed and who will support the family longer term. We will continue to monitor our progress

Priority Action 2: The Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People

The Domestic Abuse Team dashboard information for August 2022 – July 2023 showed the team received a total of 2,040 referrals for a total of 1,079 people. A total of 83 referrals were received directly for children (under 16s) with a further 25 for 16- and 17-year-olds. Analysis of housing data for the two years up to July 2022 for Gateshead demonstrates that 42% had a child in the household.

Operation Encompass enables police and social care to raise concerns about domestic abuse with schools for children in their educational settings. In the year October 2022 to September 2023, 1,742 Operation Encompass reports were made to Children's Social Services where schools had concerns about domestic abuse of children in their settings.

An identified priority and to align with the independent strategic review commissioned by the Gateshead Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, (which took place in the second half of 2023), a **multi-agency audit** was undertaken by the GSCP in December 2023. A key strength identified the focus around the support provided by all agencies including continued attempts to engage; the development of strong relationships with one user stating: *"The emotional support I received was warm and responsive."* however it was also noted that some groups may have an inherent distrust or anxiety about authorities due to engagement with child in need or child protection services. It was also noted that there was limited provision to work with young people directly involved with Domestic Abuse.

Following the audit and the Domestic Abuse review, the Domestic Abuse Board (DAB) have established a Children and Young People sub-group to prevent harm which will report jointly to the DAB and the GSCP in 24/25. Recommendations from the audit will be taken forward through this and the impact of this will be measured at that time.



Our children have helped us learn from their experience and working in partnership with Digital Voice for Communities and have produced a Digital Me film sharing their experiences of domestic abuse. The film forms part the partnership training offer across Gateshead. The film was celebrated at the national Social Worker of the Year November 2023 and won the gold award for 'Digital Transformation in Social Work 2023' -

<https://youtu.be/TCo2VuHequ0>

Priority Action 3: Serious Youth Violence and the Fear of Violence


Partnership working in place

2023 saw the development of a multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescence service which brought together the Youth Justice Service, and services for children missing from home or care; prevention of offending; child on parent violence and aggression and serious youth violence, alongside the Trusting Hands service and Contextualised Safeguarding services. The aim was to reduce the number of changes of lead professional, improve relational practice, ensure a robust edge of care offer for teenagers to prevent entry to care; improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people and reduce risk of harm outside the home.

A closer working partnership has also developed between the Education Support Services team, Contextual Safeguarding team and River Tees MAT for learners unable to attend school through the Familiar Faces group of evidence, to support children and young people who are involved in serious youth violence.

The Exploitation Safeguarding Nurse is an established role, commissioned by the ICB, leading on health responses to exploitation and a collaborative relationship with partner agencies, in particular the Multi Agency Exploitation Hub and the Prevention Hub. She is an active participant in multi-agency meetings and delivers interventions successfully to children and adults (and where appropriate family members) who are suspected to be victims of exploitation.

Feedback on the role of the Exploitation Nurse from children, young people, and adults at risk and this has been 100% positive with quotes such as:



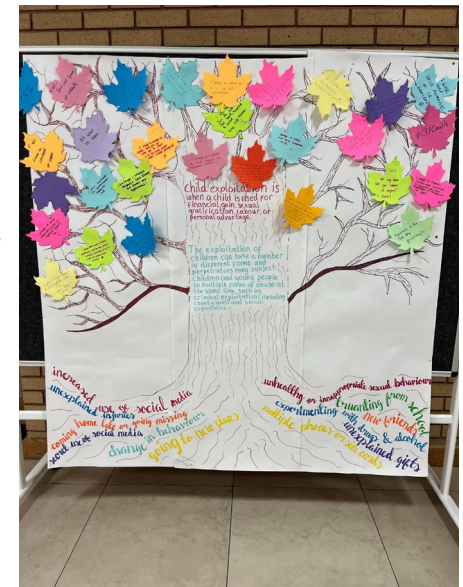
"I can talk to Kath about anything – she listens to me and is honest, she doesn't make me feel like I'm too blame" – (15-year-old female)

"I never mind doing work with you, coz you listen to me, and you don't just tell me what I should think or what I should do, we get loads of work done but we can still have a laugh." – (17-year-old male)

In January 2023 Gateshead Youth Justice Service produced a Digital Me video with Digital Voice. Several young people helped to co-produce an animated film capturing their experiences of how they became involved in offending behaviours, their experiences of the Youth Justice Service and what worked for them to stop offending. The film can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/tnoyL3OhF5A>

GSCP was proud to support the 10th anniversary of Child Exploitation Awareness Day in March. This tree, containing messages to encourage everyone to think, spot and speak out against abuse and to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to adults developing inappropriate relationships with children or children abusing their peers was created with young women involved in the service.



Priority Action 3: Serious Youth Violence and the Fear of Violence (cont..)

A **multi-agency audit** was undertaken in January 2023 using the new 'Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) for serious youth violence' framework.

Strengths identified were that good multi-agency working with information is shared appropriately, both within Gateshead's organisations and across the wider region, rich information is shared informally. The development of strong, trusted relationships between young people and a particular key worker, leading to disclosures in some circumstances. Support is provided to the wider family, not just young person, and attempts are made to consider any cultural needs.

However, it was identified that as this cohort included young people not open to services there is a lack of 'ownership' by a service. Voluntary agencies are not always included in the process in a timely way, despite the wealth of information they can hold / support they provide. Young People from non-British backgrounds are over-represented in this cohort and more training and awareness of different cultures and how these impact on families is needed as well as work around supporting transitions for young people who wouldn't be able to continue with support from services.

An immediate action was that a young people's substance misuse worker was co-located within the Vulnerable Adolescence service to break down any barriers to information sharing.

A greater focus on equality and diversity to promote more understanding of different cultures is a focus within Children's Social Care. A new task and finish group led by the Principal Social Worker meets regularly and includes senior leaders within the service and Workforce Development. Northumbria Police's community engagement team promote learning regarding the behaviours required by services when supporting families from different cultures and the Partnership is working closely with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to promote the number of commissioned interventions they are able to offer.

A Contextual Safeguarding Development Group has been established with five sub-groups of which Serious Youth Violence is one. The impact of this will be measured in 24/25.

Priority Action 4: Children's and Young People's Mental Health

Pressures upon mental health services, including demand for neurodevelopmental assessments continue to be a challenge in Gateshead. In response to this, a system review of the mental health, learning disability and neurodevelopmental pathway was undertaken in 2023. This has led to the formation of a system response with agreement reached with partners and senior leaders to develop a new commissioned offer in 2024/25.

This new approach will join up support across pathways, improving access to services particularly by providing early intervention support within communities to reduce waits for more specialist services. To support pathways whilst this work is undertaken, additional non-recurrent investment has been made into CNTW to increase access to services which will include where appropriate children & young people involved with the Youth Justice Service (YJS).

To support the system re-design, a Children & Young People's mental health needs assessment has been commissioned by Gateshead public health team and an audit of what is happening in schools to support the Mental Health of children and young people has been undertaken. A health needs assessment focussed specifically on care experienced young people and a revised care leavers strategy are also being co-produced with health colleagues. Findings will be used to work with system partners to develop joined up approaches, including for improving access to mental health services for young people with co-occurring needs.

Key Actions for 24/25:

- A multi-agency audit on mental health provision to ensure that children can access to the right support at the right time will be undertaken.
- Alternative to Crisis Rapid Response Service to be piloted with Gateshead Council for a 2 year period – to provide an alternative to admission offer for young people experiencing a mental health crisis. This service will be open to young people involved with the YJS experiencing a mental health crisis and will reduce acute hospital admissions.
- Procurement of a new mental health, learning disability & neurodevelopmental offer for Gateshead to be undertaken in 2024/25 by NENC ICB. This offer will provide a needs led and graduated response, including a preventative approach to mental health needs and earlier access to specialist mental health and neurodevelopmental diagnosis services.
- Launch of wrap around support via multi-agency events for children, young people and families awaiting a neurodevelopmental diagnosis to implement a needs led support offer and provide timely access to wider support services.

GSCP – The work of our subgroups

The **Learning and Improvement Group (LIG)** is chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children. Its main purpose is to identify multi-agency training and learning priorities for safeguarding children; consider the implications from new policy, legislation, research, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and themed multi-agency audits; and develop and review policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In 2023/24, this group commissioned four multi-agency audits to be undertaken by a smaller group of relevant partners. The LIG oversaw the report findings from these (*detailed later in this report*); agreed to the strengths and areas for development to support learning and improvement and considered how information is shared and how partners work together to address the issues raised.

The LIG also considered and oversaw the actions arising from three local learning reviews (*summarised later in this report*) which were undertaken by the **Child Safeguarding Practice and Rapid Review Group**.

It carefully considered regional and national learning including the independent investigation into the West Lane Hospital elsewhere in the North-East; the National safeguarding practice review into safeguarding children with disabilities and complex needs in residential settings; and the themes identified in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Annual Report 2022/23 and ensured Gateshead's compliance against the recommendations and issues identified.

The LIG also has responsibility for reviewing policies and procedures and has updated current, and published new, local procedure resources on <https://nesubregion.trixonline.co.uk/resources/local-resources>

GSCP – The work of our subgroups

The **Strategic MSET (referred to as Joint Strategic Exploitation Group (JSEG) in Gateshead)** is a sub-group of both the GSCP and Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The Police chair undertakes this role across the Northumbria Police Force footprint (6 LA areas) which promotes sharing of learning and best practice and connectivity across the region in identifying emerging trends or concerns. The remit of the group is to lead on the development of strategic work in relation to all aspects of exploitation, including but not limited to: Sexual Exploitation; Criminal Exploitation; Modern Slavery and Trafficking and Missing.

In terms of children's work in 2023/24, this group oversaw and supported the review of the vulnerable adolescents' services and supported the developing of a new group which will report into the JSEG - the **Contextual Safeguarding Group** which is chaired by the JSEG deputy chair and Local Authority's Practice Lead for Innovation, Transformation and Vulnerable Adolescents. This group collectively informs and influences updates to the JSEG. It focuses on 5 key strands of work: Safeguarding of individual young people; Development of safeguarding places and spaces; Response to child protection; Transitional safeguarding; and Serious Youth Violence.

JSEG was also involved in the review of the MSET arrangements which are detailed A regional review of **Missing Sexually Exploited and Trafficked (MSET)** was undertaken towards the end of 2023 and start of 2024. The aim of MSET, introduced in 2018, was to have a corporate approach throughout the 6 LA's to safeguard and protect those children who were regularly going missing and at risk of or suffering from sexual exploitation. MSET provided a value added multi agency response. However, over the years it was recognised that MSET was being used differently by each LA and was beginning to become overrun with referrals. There was an inconsistent approach to children transitioning and adults; an increase in County lines and Criminal exploitation; and a lack of focus on perpetrators and hot spot locations.

Partners in Gateshead were key to a multi-agency task and finish group to consider improvements to the system so that the process was standardised across all six LA's in the Northumbria Police area; to include adults in the process; to be outcome focussed; to not only focus on the victim, but also on the offender to remove/resolve the issue and also the location. As a result, a new process was agreed – Partnership Reduction of Exploitation and Missing (PREM) which will put the onus on each local authority to gatekeep cases, which will give a number of hours back to partners and ensure a multi agency problem solving meeting to work together to reduce risk, tackle perpetrators and disrupt hot spot locations. The PREM meeting will be chaired by a Detective Inspector from the Prevention Department, Northumbria Police to ensure a corporate and consistent approach. Following agreement to proceed on this basis in June 2024, a roadshow, training and raising awareness with partners will be undertaken in summer 2024 before the new process is launched in the autumn of 2024. The impact of this new process will be monitored at a strategic level.

GSCP – The work of our subgroups

The **Education and CSC Safeguarding Group** was re-established in 2023 and is chaired by Local Authority's Strategic Lead for Education Services. The group meets termly to align with the school year. Each school cluster group is represented along with specialist provision, Gateshead College and nurseries alongside colleagues from children's social care and the education team in the local authority to engage with the work of the Safeguarding Partners to enhance collaboration between partners to keep children safe in education. One of our Young Ambassadors is also a member of this sub-group.

Through the connections made in this group, the partnership is able to focus on understanding what education partners tell us affects the safeguarding in education settings. This has led to work focusing on understanding the referral process to ensure more appropriate referrals are made and what can be done in those cases where they are not progressed; understanding the role of school staff in the new Social Workers In Family hubs and supporting the development of the Violence Reduction Unit's (VRU) new knife crime protocol to ensure it meets the needs of Gateshead's schools.

Following the publication of Working Together 2023, the sub-group and role of education within the partnership is subject to review to further strengthen arrangements.

GSCP – How we work with children and young people

The voice of the child is at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Involving children and families is essential to safeguarding in Gateshead both in contributing to delivering the GSCPs vision and in helping to scrutinise and review the partnership arrangements themselves.

These include:

- Multi-agency case audits
- School councils, youth groups, support groups
- Service user panels

This is supported from information directly from data sources such as:

- The Children & Young People's Participation Team (Gateshead Council)
- Performance teams across the partnership
- Commissioning

The views of young people were crucial in the review of the GSCP and these were sought via interviews with the Young Ambassadors to get in-depth and honest feedback in how the new arrangements should be shaped. Whilst the young people had been heavily involved in deciding the priorities for 23/24 and have a voice through attendance at partnership sub-groups, during the review it was recognised that the involvement of young people in partnership arrangements needed to be strengthened and this is a priority for 2024 with our aims being to make use of the existing systems, groups and forums to gather the views of children and families to encourage children to have their say, share their views and experiences, challenge and support local decision makers and shape and influence strategic planning, commissioning and service provision.

We are working in partnership to review our engagement processes, policies to make sure that all children and young people can be heard. A joint Working Plan, led by the Children & Young People's Participation Team, is being developed to support our young people at all stages of their journey. GSCP will be heavily involved in this work.

GSCP – How we work with children and young people

Gateshead Council - The Role of the Young Ambassadors



At the start of 2022, Aisha, Jake and Mariceu were appointed into a 6 hour per week posts as Gateshead's first Care Experienced Young Ambassadors. It was originally planned that these posts would be for 12 months, but they were extended to 18-month contracts. All had an action-packed year from visiting Parliament to delivering sessions to young people, staff and elected Members directly. The ambassadors were each linked to two workstreams of the Corporate Parenting Partnership. Aisha led on participation and placements and accommodation; Jake led on education and health; and Mariceu led on leaving care and activities and leisure.

Mariceu said: "My time as a young ambassador has enabled me to grow in confidence and self esteem and has helped me progress to help towards my end goal of being a foster carer".



Non-recurrent funding sourced by the local NHS Integrated Care Board resulted in an employment opportunity for a Special Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Young Ambassador/ Business Admin Apprentice within Gateshead Council's SEND Team. The funding came with the specific caveat that a positive recruitment process is sought for an individual with some form of SEND. The post was open to someone aged 18-25 with experience of the SEND system in Gateshead who were looking for an employment opportunity.

The post was filled in December 2022 by Harry Vincent, who worked in Gateshead Council's SEND Team. Harry used his lived experience of Gateshead's SEND system to help raise awareness and understanding of the issues young people with SEND face. Harry left the SEND team in March 2024 and started work immediately as the social media guru for Learning and Skills

For more information on the achievements of the young ambassadors in 23/24, see the Children's Rights and Engagement 2023/2024 Annual Report

GSCP – How we work with children and young people

The role is a pivotal part of our service. In October 2023 we welcomed three new Young Ambassadors to the team. Again, they are care experienced young people who work with services to ensure that children and young people's voices and experiences are listened to. This year the involvement of the Young Ambassadors in the GSCP has been strengthened by their membership in the sub-groups and their involvement in support with specific strands of work including actions from a local learning review.



Josh : Since becoming a young Ambassador I have helped deliver training and am currently working on the new Care pledge and a new leaving care form for those who are going into their own tenancy at 18. I have also visited the residential homes and started building relations with young people to see how we can help them more within Gateshead Social Services. Recently I worked with young people on the new Digital me video focused on the educational side on a young person perspective. The aim is to reach local schools to shine a light on this issue. I am also helping with the design and development of the new care leavers space, this will be a where a young person can go to get help and support from the leaving care team or just to have a place to talk.



Poppy : My area for work is health, arts and leisure, and the voice of the child. I am currently also working with the Regional Children in Care Council and our own One Voice group who are working on a pack to be delivered to all the existing children in our care as well as new children coming into care and will form the skeleton of foster care training, so everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet!



Alexandra : Since starting my role as a Young Ambassador I've taken part in many things, my favourites so far have been foster carer training, youth justice panels and spending time getting to know some of our young people. I have joined the Partnership's Education sub-group to share my experiences with members and have been supporting young people in our care to take part in activities with the youth assembly and the young inspectors. Through doing this I have realised that young women in our care need some extra support and a safe space to share their struggles and I am now hoping to start my own youth group.

Multi-Agency Training and Workforce Development

Between April 2023 and March 2024, 27 partnership training courses have been delivered covering 16 different topics.

A total of 405 individuals have completed these training sessions.

An introduction to child and adolescent mental health

Child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation and trafficking

Child protection awareness

County lines

Effective child protection conferences and core groups

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Gambling awareness

Invisible men

Multi Agency Child protection L3

Neglect

Practical applications MCA Children

Safeguarding babies from abuse and neglect

Safeguarding children in the digital world

Safeguarding children with disabilities

The impact of parental mental health

Understanding self-harm

Feedback from sessions includes:

A massive new awareness of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Thank you so much (Voluntary sector worker attending Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder)

A greater understanding of what to consider when assessing children's need as well as when and how to refer (Gateshead council worker attending An introduction to child and adolescent mental health)

Multi-Agency Training and Workforce Development

As part of the GSCP Review, a full evaluation of the existing multi-agency training provision and offer was undertaken, following which the training offer now includes a tiered approach of multi-agency training opportunities which provides practitioners and volunteers access to different types of learning and development activities relating to their area of work.

- Dedicated safeguarding training is now delivered by the GSCP and SAB Business Managers to the voluntary and community sector within community settings on a regular basis. Feedback received includes:

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"I wanted to thank both you for the outstanding job in conducting the safeguarding training session with the trustees and key volunteers at our Community Centre. Your expertise and dedication to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our communities is truly fantastic."

"The thorough and informative delivery of the session equipped all with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a safe and secure environment for users at the centre and to also help in protecting the integrity of the charity. Your commitment to this important aspect of our work is greatly appreciated."

- A dedicated Learning and Development post for the GSCP and Safer Adults Board has also been agreed and will be recruited to in 24/25. This post dedicated to safeguarding will ensure that there is good co-ordination and support to the Business Managers and wider partners and allow the development of greater cross partnership working and development of resources and innovative training methods
- GSCP agreed to fund a new online training programme with Me Learning providing access to 11 different courses to ensure that as many people as possible in Gateshead who wish to, have access to key safeguarding training, and complements our wider offer available to our safeguarding partners. This training can be accessed [here](#). In the first two months, 122 active users joined Me-Learning and feedback has been 100% positive with a youth worker emailing to say "Love the me-learning portal!" Usage and feedback will continued to be monitored as the year progresses to enable the GSCP Executive to consider whether to continue with the site after this year's contract ends in March 2025.

Learning – Analysis from learning reviews

Summary of learning reviews undertaken in 23-24.

There were no reviews in 23-24 which met the criteria for national learning but a number were undertaken where it was felt multi-agency learning could be beneficial.

A multi-agency prevent and protect model and guidance was developed with partners to minimise the **risk of sudden infant death** following the thematic report published by the national panel. This report identified that these tragic deaths occur more frequently in families that are particularly vulnerable, with many of the risk factors associated with SIDS overlapping with those for child abuse and neglect. [Minimising the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\) - Safeguarding in Gateshead \(gatesheadsafeguarding.org.uk\)](#)

Non-Accidental injuries in immobile babies: The review focused on a case where a baby with a fracture was moved between hospitals and different approaches were taken to safeguarding parental supervision. As a result of this case, in addition to single agency actions, the multi-agency pathway for bruising was updated to include all non-accidental injuries. This was shared across the region and was adopted by a number of the partnership areas: [multi-agency-pathway-for-bruising-in-non-mobile-children.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

Drug Testing Parents: The review focused on a case where a child protection plan was put in place but then removed on the basis of a hair strand drug test. Previous work on 'invisible fathers' was revisited across partners; training has been agreed to be delivered on the limitations and results of drug testing and will be delivered in 24/25 and a multi-agency briefing note was developed on hair strand testing: [practice-briefing-hair-strand-testing.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

Death of care leaver: The review focused on what was known by agencies and whether any information which could have prevented the care leaver taking their own life could have been shared. In addition to single agency actions regarding contact with birth parents, the Information Sharing Agreement was reviewed and updated: [information-sharing-protocol.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

As a result of recommendations in the GSCP Review, the process for undertaking Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notifications and Child Safeguarding Practice Rapid Review Pathway was reviewed. As a result, a new procedure and pathway was agreed with neighbouring authority, Newcastle, and a Joint Case Review Group between Gateshead and Newcastle has been established to review cases and incidents of importance and to oversee and monitor case review activity where it is agreed that there might be multi-agency learning which could be applied to future practice: [nscp-and-gscp-learning-and-improvement-pathway.june24.docx \(live.com\)](#) and [joint-local-case-review-group-tor.may24.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](#)

Learning – multi-agency audits

In 2023/24 regular audit was built into process as part of assurance route. Themes will focus on priorities agreed by the GSCP and also inspection frameworks

Each multi-agency audit was undertaken by the partnership to review practice in relation to multi-agency decision making, specifically around risks to children, how information is shared and how partners work together to support planning. The aim of the audit was to identify the strengths and areas for development which will support learning and improvement.

In 2023/24, the following four multi-agency audits were undertaken.

- SEND (following this an Area SEND inspection of Gateshead Local Area Partnership was undertaken which included a multi-agency audit as part of the inspection. The outcome of this is detailed in the [Final-Gateshead-Strategic-Priority-SEND-Action-Plan-1.pdf \(gateshead-localoffer.org\)](#)
- Child Protection
- Domestic Abuse and the Impact on Children and Young People
- Serious Youth Violence

In doing so, for each one, six records for children / young people were selected for the audit by the Performance and Data team in the Council, other than Serious Youth Violence where Northumbria Police selected the six records.

Agencies were asked to undertake single agency audits prior to the multi-agency audit discussions to ensure that all relevant information was provided to give a holistic view of multi-agency practice.

Learning – multi-agency audits: Strengths and Areas for Learning

STRENGTHS

- There is good evidence that children have positive relationships with workers and they know their children well, this includes social workers, early help workers, teachers and health staff.
- There is good evidence of information sharing between the partnership when risks escalate for children.
- Risks are understood across the partnership
- Support is provided to the wider family, not just young person, and attempts are made to consider any cultural needs.
- Evidence of good strength based discussions and narrative language which would be understood by parents.

AREAS FOR LEARNING

- Voluntary agencies are not always included in the process in a timely way, despite the wealth of information they can hold / support they provide.
- Need for more of a trauma-informed approach from all services including support given to parents when they children are removed from their care.
- Clear communication to all services involved when there is a change in family circumstances
- Diversity and cultural needs not always consistently or robustly explored for children including access to services, the impact of poverty and community settings
- Professional accountability, curiosity and challenge could be further strengthened
- Consideration of the lead practitioner role across the partnership and clear understanding of roles and responsibilities in the wider system

The areas for learning are all being addressed either within the specific working groups to take forward actions from the audits or within wider partnership work.

GSCP: What's Next

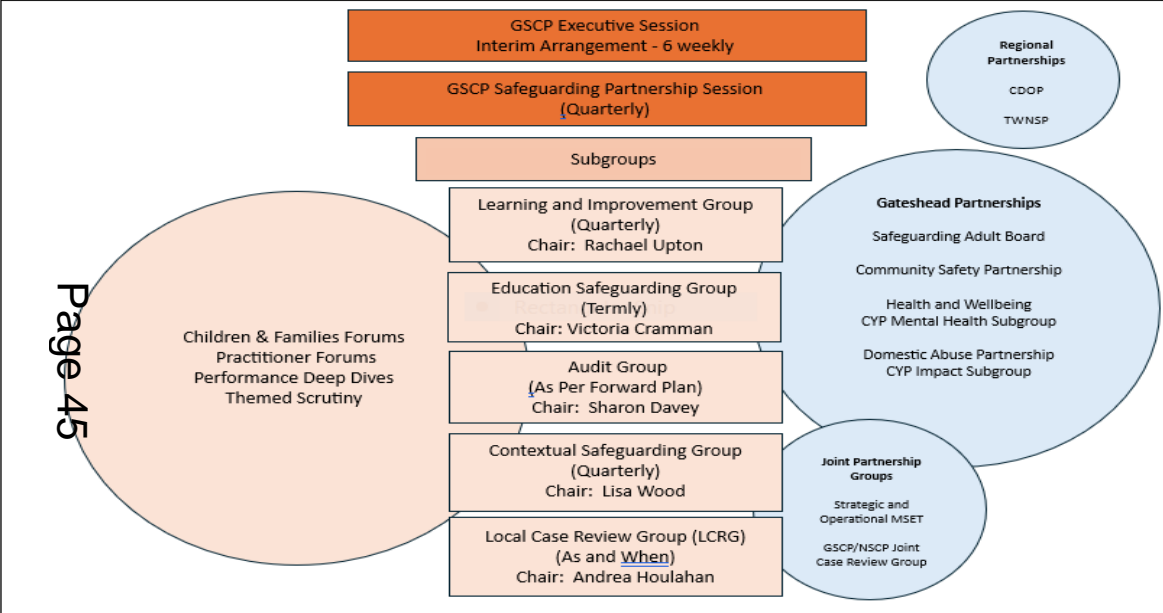
A two year GSCP Business Plan (2024 – 2026) will be developed which outlines the priorities and how we will deliver against those priorities.

The priorities that we identified in 2023 remain priorities in our 2024 – 2026 business plan. We have developed ways of working with our wider partnerships and boards to improve outcomes for children and young people. Some of the wider partnerships and boards have statutory responsibility for areas we have identified as priorities.

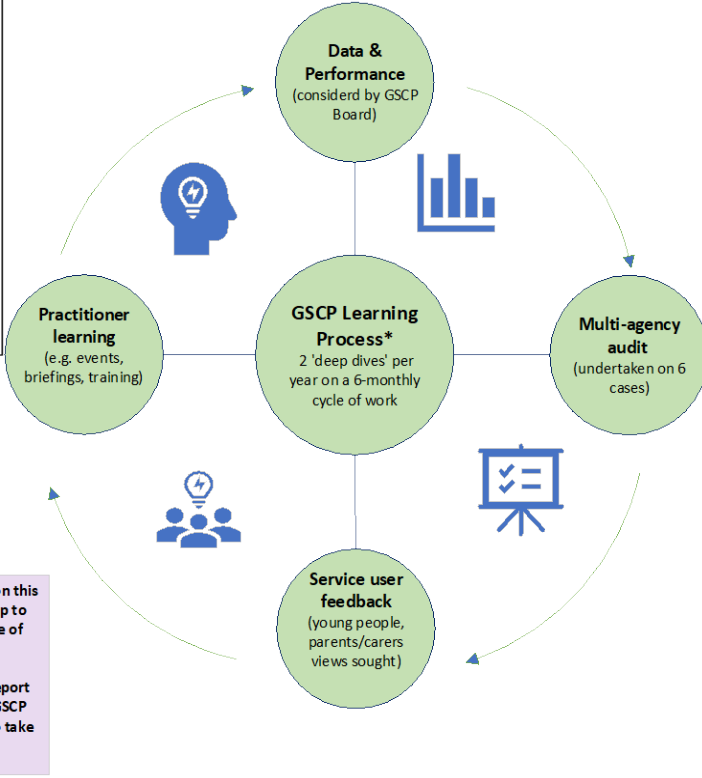
The GSCP have identified the following as priority areas which will influence the work of the GSCP over 2024/26:

- **Priority One** – Child Protection – GSCP will have governance, oversight and will lead on this work. The work will focus on elements of child protection including exploitation and neglect, but, will also focus on how we work as multi-agencies to identify and manage risk and plans.
- **Priority Two** – impact of Domestic Abuse on Children and Young People - GSCP will have a particular focus on how effective partners are in reducing impact and supporting children and young people who are exposed to harm through domestic abuse. We will work with the Domestic Abuse Partnership to prevent harm to children and young people impacted by domestic abuse. A subgroup of the Domestic Abuse Partnership has been developed to look at this. GSCP members are involved in this work.
- **Priority Three** – Serious Youth Violence and the Fear of Violence – we know from the feedback we receive from young people and the work we undertake that this remains a concern in Gateshead. The GSCP will understand the work undertaken through the Community Safety Partnership and through the Violence Reduction Unit who have oversight of this. GSCP are developing a strengthened arrangement with the Community Safety Partnership to work together to ensure there is joined up work in relation to this key area of concern.
- **Priority Four** – Children's and Young People's Mental Health – we know from direct work with children and young people, feedback we have received from those working with children and families, but, also from the increased demand for support that this remains an area of concern in Gateshead. We will work with the Health and Wellbeing Board in relation to their strategy which includes work relating to the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

The revised version of the arrangements is outlined below. These will be finalised ahead of publication of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and operational by the end of 2024. A key development is the inclusion of the Director of Education on the GSCP Executive group to reflect the inclusion of education at a strategic level. Membership of each sub-group is also being reviewed to ensure all relevant agencies are appropriately engaged and that education representatives are included throughout as well as on the Education sub-group.



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TITLE OF REPORT: Progress Update on delivery of SEND Strategy *(to include progress against all 4 priorities; SEND tribunal data; pathways into EET for those with SEND)*

Purpose of the Report

This report aims to share information with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the **progress made towards the 4 priority areas of the SEND Strategy, share data in relation to Tribunals and information in relation to pathways into Education, Employment and Training for young people in Gateshead with special educational needs.**

Background

The catalyst for the development of the Gateshead SEND Improvement Plan was the development of the Gateshead SEND Strategy 2023-2026 which was co-produced with all partners in January 2023. It sets out the vision and priorities for SEND over the next 3 years, with the aim of improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families. The SEND Strategy is ambitious about improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the whole system approach to achieve the step change needed. This requires educational settings, health commissioners and providers, Gateshead Council's social care and education services working together with children and their families to meet needs, within the context of national funding that has not kept pace with demand. The SEND improvement programme is designed to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This report outlines what the SEND information programme of work has achieved so far and the proposed focus for 2023-2026 to embed and accelerate change as well as responding to the recent inspection findings.

The SEND Strategy and Improvement Programme is aligned with Gateshead's THRIVE agenda which seeks to realise the Council's ambition that everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them to succeed in life. The SEND Partnership Strategy 2023 - 26 emphasises the better long-term outcomes for children and young people when they are educated closer to home, with the right support so that children and young people who have SEND can live, learn and grow up locally to achieve their potential. The SEND strategy sits alongside the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which in turn is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The Strategy and improvement plan formed the basis of the local area's self-assessment which was completed in preparation for the inspection which took place in May 2023. Since the inspection, the improvement plan has been revised and amended to reflect the recommendations from the inspection and the plan forms the basis of an extensive programme of transformation work over the next three years.

Since the pandemic, Gateshead has seen a significant rise in the overall number of children and young people identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is particularly the case for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or requests for assessment for an EHCP. This has placed all SEND teams in the Council under significant pressure. This rise in demand, alongside financial pressures, has also placed challenges upon the wider workforce connected to those with Special Educational Needs, including those in the health, care and school sectors. The pandemic has particularly impacted on the number of children and young people who are identified as having autism, and those with social, emotional and mental needs.

Current Context

- **39,784 children (0-17) live in Gateshead and 17,081 young adults (18-25)**
- **18.7% of children & young people have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (5730)**
- **14.1% pupils have SEND support (4308)**
- **4.6% have an EHCP (1422)**

Source

SEND Data - Special educational needs in England - 2023/24 Academic year (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>)

Population Data – Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, June 2023 (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales>)

The Gateshead SEND Strategy

A wide range of partners have been involved in the development of the SEND strategy. Consultation, engagement, and co-production has been undertaken with children, families, young people, schools, other education partners, health colleagues and social care colleagues.

Our vision in Gateshead is for all children and young people with SEND to thrive, have appropriate provision, feel positive about their next steps and believe in themselves. We put families at the heart of everything we do.

Our strategic approach is to 'Make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives'.

For children and young people with Special Educational needs this means our four priorities are:

1. To have a transparent approach to identify children and young people's needs which is understood by parents, carers and professionals, so that the right support is in place at the right time.
2. To actively engage with children and young people and their parents and carers, so that their vision of 'Our choice, our voice' is heard and supported during strategic planning.
3. For health, social care, and education services to work together to commission the best support for children and young people's needs, and to keep all children and young people safe.

4. To ensure that children and young people are well prepared, supported and feel positive about taking their next steps.

Progress Update on the four main priorities of the SEND Strategy

- 1. To have a transparent approach to identify children and young people's needs which is understood by parents, carers and professionals, so that the right support is in place at the right time.***

The Gateshead SEND Thresholds

A SEND Consultant has been commissioned to lead on the review of the current Gateshead graduated approach to the identification of special educational needs and to work with all partners to coproduce the Gateshead SEND Thresholds. All areas of Education Schools and Inclusion, Health and Social care and the PCF and Young People have reviewed a template and have adapted it to their service offer and to Gateshead ways of working. We have had 3 seconded SENCo's from Gateshead schools who have supported the pilot schools across the autumn and spring term with implementing the document. This has been very important to ensure that the documents refined so it works for our young people. The Pilot schools and officers from education, health and social care have had training sessions throughout September and October 2023 and they have contributed their first-hand experience of the thresholds into the launch event and document. A local photographer was commissioned to support with the graphics for the document and a SENCo has been allocated to ensure that the PCF are given regular updates on progress made towards the document. In January 2024 a launch event was arranged and took place over 3 sessions. Following this event, a training schedule was published and has been available to all stakeholders until the end of August. The training schedule ensures all partners have a shared understanding of the four main areas of special educational needs and what this means specifically to them, their role in relation to the Thresholds. In February 2024, the Gateshead SEND Thresholds was published for settings, providers and stakeholders to begin over the rest of the school year to familiarise themselves with the document. In June and July 2024 moderation sessions took place to ensure all schools were using the thresholds in a consistent way. From September 2024, all educational settings will be expected to use the Gateshead SEND Thresholds and all referrals to services, panels and needs assessments/EHCP will be in line with the document. Following a review of the implementation to date, a secondment of a PVI practitioner has been commissioned to support further training and implementation of the Thresholds into our early years' settings.

SEND Panel Arrangements

A review of all panel arrangements has been completed across education schools and inclusion by a SEND Consultant who has reviewed our systems in line with regional and national policies, agenda and best practice. We have refined our panels to enhance the opportunities for conversations at the earliest possible stage, to be solution focused and to strengthen our expertise of the workforce in our educational settings.

Proactive Planning Tool

During the local area SEND inspection families told us that they felt like they had to navigate a very complicated system to get the support their child with complex special educational

needs in time for starting school. To respond to this feedback, colleagues within the Education, Schools and Inclusion and the Data Team are working together to develop a database system which will support with the strategic planning of children born into Gateshead with complex needs. This system will track children and young people as they are born or move into area and will support in placement and service need planning at every key transition. This will respond to a creating a strategy for children 0-5, to the development of the ARMs strategy and to trajectory of required special school places. The first prototype of this database has been made and feedback has been collated from Managers within Education, health and social care and our specialist settings. The next stage will be for this to be shared with senior managers in the council for further development.

Additional Resourced Mainstream Settings (ARMS)

Additional Resourced Mainstream Settings are based in our mainstream schools to support young people in primary and secondary school who require additional resources on top of the 'normal offer' from a mainstream school to ensure they can access the mainstream curriculum with their peers. Depending on the area of special educational needs, this can be an additional classroom where the child will integrate with their class but have the additional space available or it can be an enhanced school offer without an additional class.

The ARMs were identified during the local area inspection as a strength however the above work in relation to the trajectory of children being born into Gateshead, attending our primary ARMs will inform place planning for the secondary phase. A review of all ARMs setting has been undertaken, led by our newly appointed School Improvement Partner for SEND. We have two secondary provisions who are in discussions with us in relation to extending the secondary ARMs offer.

Special School Designations

During the local area inspection, families shared that they did not feel that children had the same opportunities in terms of curriculum and experiences accessed during their time in school if they attended a special school as if they attended an ARMs or mainstream school. To respond to this, the Strategic Lead for SEND and Inclusion has worked with Special School leaders to review their school designations. This is the area of special educational needs that the school specialises in. Special School Leaders have been working with their School Improvement Partner and a SEND Consultant to complete analysis of their school populations and how these have changed over the last 5 years. This is important to support with the development of the culture in Gateshead of when a child should access special school and is very important that this information feeds into the Gateshead SEND Thresholds.

SEND Quality Assurance & Monitoring Team

To ensure the right support is in the right place at the right time, the Quality Assurance and Monitoring strand of the SEND Team has been strengthened. We have recruited to the full-time lead post and have added capacity with an additional Quality Assurance and Monitoring Officer. This team will be seated separately to the SEND Casework Team so as not to confuse their role with that of the caseworkers who complete statutory duties. This team are going to be central to the monitoring of the Gateshead SEND Thresholds in schools as they complete the monitoring visits of SEND in our educational settings. They will also be the point of contact for any family, professional who have concerns in relation to the provision

for SEND C&YP in Gateshead. It is imperative that we strengthen the SEND Support monitoring process to ensure that we are identifying need early and supporting in a child's current school to ensure there is no escalation of need. As part of the implementation of the SEND Thresholds, we are trialling a SEND Support panel to support schools in meeting the needs of learners at this stage to prevent escalation to EHC needs assessment.

0-5 Service

As identified during the local area inspection, families felt like they had to 'fight' a system to get their child who was under 5 the right provision even when they had been born with significant needs. In response to this, we have reviewed the current resource and team structures and have restructured all early years teams under one 0-5 Service. This newly revised service will commence in September and will mean that families and providers have one point of contact for support for children aged 0-5. It will also mean that all 0-5 Early years SEND Teams are managed more consistently which will support transitions from one service to the next.

- 2. To actively engage with children and young people and their parents and carers, so that their vision of 'Our choice, our voice' is heard and supported during strategic planning.***

The young people's voice and contributions were identified as a strength through the SEND Local Area Inspection. The work completed in relation to the Participation Strategy was also identified as strength. This improvement work had been completed via the SEND Strategy, prior to the inspection. Following the inspection, the core aim of priority area was identified in the two areas for improvement in relation to the communication with families experiencing the needs assessment process and also how the SEND Casework Team communicate with partners who contribute to these plans.

SEND Team Review

To respond to the above points, post inspection, a complete service review has been completed of the SEND Team. Capacity has been added to ensure a more relational approach can be provided by the team. Due to the promotion of one of the managers in the team, a newly appointed SEND Team Manager commenced post in January. They have been working since their appointment, under the lead of the SEND Service Manager to enable cultural change within the SEND Casework Team. All SEND Caseworkers have signed up to the NASEN caseworker training which will support this cultural change.

SEND Team Communication

A communication strategy has been developed and is currently being trialled in the team to ensure a consistent approach from each Caseworker. A CPD day has taken place, with newly appointed staff to launch the new communication strategy and team vision. In addition to this, the team has been restructured into two sections. One with responsibility for the statutory assessment processes and one for the quality assurance and monitoring of SEND Support. This aspect of the team has had one post added to the structure to ensure all partners have one point of contact if they have a query in relation to a child/young person with SEND. They will then triage it to the correct service or will work with the school to support the development of the provision at send support to meet needs.

Since the appointment of the new SEND Team Manager and Quality Assurance and Monitoring Team Manager a full review of all aspects of communication has been completed. Any communication which is sent externally to families and schools has been reviewed to ensure a more relational approach. The schools have also been allocated a lead caseworker for their school as a point of contact to support communication.

New EHCP Format

The Quality Assurance and Monitoring lead has reviewed existing EHCP paperwork and has revised with all partners the format to which we use to write our EHCP in Gateshead. We have chosen to use the 'test' National EHCP format which is being trialled as part of the DfE SEND & AP Change Programme. This format has had positive feedback, being much more person centred. It continues to be reviewed.

The SEND Service Manager, Designated Clinical Officer and Designated Social Care Officer are working in collaboration, with the guidance of the SEND Consultant in relation to the implementation of the SEND Thresholds to review and redevelop the processes and procedures in relation to collecting the views of all professionals involved with a child to inform the needs assessment.

3. For health, social care, and education services to work together to commission the best support for children and young people's needs, and to keep all children and young people safe.

A significant amount of work has gone into reducing the waiting times for children across children's therapies since the local area SEND inspection. The teams have reviewed ways of working and scoped out opportunities to provide group sessions to support reducing the waiting times for assessment where appropriate. Children's OT, Physio, Nursing, Bladder and Bowel & CSLT have updated the team webpages with useful information and resources to support while Children are awaiting to be assessed. Children's Speech and Language team have successfully recruited into vacancies with start dates over the Summer/Autumn period, which will support the reduction in waiting times.

The services aim to reduce all waiting time to under 18 weeks, the increase in demand and vacancies has made it difficult to achieve in all therapy areas. The team have completed capacity and demand modelling, with some recent discussions with commissioners regarding the possibility for extra staffing resource to support the demand within Children's Speech and language and Childrens OT. The services remain committed to driving these wait times down and working alongside partners to ensure children with SEND in Gateshead receive an appropriate, timely service.

Webpage links below will direct to Childrens Services:

[Children's Services - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Community Nursing Team - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Occupational Therapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Physiotherapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Children's Speech and Language Therapy - Gateshead Health](#)

[Bladder and Bowel for Children - Gateshead Health](#)

Monthly monitoring and discussion with Commissioners takes place along with the production of detailed waiting time data which the SEND inspectors had identified as a gap. The service remains committed to driving these wait times down and working alongside partners to ensure children with SEND in Gateshead receive an appropriate, timely service.

Alternative Provision Review

A Gateshead Alternative Provision Strategy has been developed and is being shared with schools for consultation. This is supported through funding from the DfE SEND/AP Change Programme for 2 years and we are working to make this a sustainable strategy moving forward. This strategy encompasses a tiered system of support and early identification as a key driver. The panel review outcome has also been embedded into this to allow for Multi-Disciplinary Teams to meet and discuss needs and therefore appropriate pathways. This also includes a costed 'Home and Hospital' provision for schools and a strategy to reduce permanent exclusions (especially for CYP with unmet SEMH needs).

Gateshead Universal Offer to Families of C&YP with SEND

There has been a review of Gateshead councils current universal offer of leisure and social activities for children and young people aged 0-25 years with SEND. The review focused on the principles of the council's Thrive agenda and how to most effectively target the council's resources to those children and families who are most in need of support whilst continuing to promote the benefits of accessing leisure and recreational activities and is linked to our strategic approach to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives.

Several areas were highlighted as concerns, issues and barriers to achieving the vision we have for children and young people with SEND to thrive, have appropriate provision, feel positive about their next steps and believe in themselves.

This included:

- *Families Don't know what is available within Gateshead,*
- *Not all community providers offering activities for children and young people with SEND.*
- *Children and young people with a range of needs.*
- *Community Facilities* – Parents shared that service facilities don't always consider the varying needs of children and young people
- *Travel* – Children, young people and parent/carers have shared that public transport links are a barrier to accessing activities and would like resources to be shared across the borough.
- *Better facilities in neighbouring LA's.*
- *Better offer for target support-* Families have shared frustration of the lack of universal services and feel that there are more services provided to children/YP who have children services involvement.

The recommendation of the review includes:

- 1) The development of a Short Breaks Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan: To transform universal services to increase inclusion, access and opportunities for children and young people with a range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in community activities. Developing and commission a graduated and flexible response for those children and young people with SEND who are unable to access the existing community activities. Offering a variety of support that will enable independence and can provide a transparent approach to identify children's needs so that the right support is in place at the right time. The strategy will include the continued work with families to develop a Short Break offer to meet children and family's needs as a graduated support response.

- 2) Development of SEND directory of social and leisure activities which will link to the family information service, Our Gateshead and the Local offer. It is hoped that this continued work will attract providers to be included in the directory and will also be a useful source of information for children services, education and health services to share with families and avoid families having to navigate several websites before finding information. This is due to launch by September 2024.

4. *To ensure that children and young people are well prepared, supported and feel positive about taking their next steps.*

Preparation for Adulthood

The implementation of the Gateshead SEND Thresholds will ensure that preparation for adulthood starts at the earliest possible stage in a child's life. This will ensure that all children with special educational needs are planning for each transition for the following areas employability & education, Independence, Community Participation and Health. All referral forms, support plans proformas and needs assessments will evidence the preparation for adulthood outcomes from September 2024.

Living Arrangements for Disabled Young People

The council has established a comprehensive transformation project across directorates and with NHS partners to review and develop housing pathways, services and accommodation pipelines to support people with complex needs. Alongside strategic development work, the project includes a priority focus on urgent complex cases of people requiring accommodation. The project is overseen by a Board comprising senior leaders in the system.

The IASCS directorate has committed to designing and establishing a new supported living service for disabled young people transitioning to adulthood with complex needs. The service will accommodate up to 4 people aged 17 to 21, providing enablement support on a transitional basis for approximately two years. The service is likely to be delivered and managed in-house by the IASCS Enablement and Independence Service.

Commissioning will also be reviewing the market for onward supported living services for disabled people with SEND and complex needs to enable appropriate move-on from the proposed new transitional service.

Gateshead Local Area Transitions Offer – Next Steps

To support the information available to families in relation to all aspects of transitions and next steps, we have commissioned a SEND consultant who will coordinate a collaboration of all stakeholders to produce a document to advise of next steps. Her work will include a complete review of all aspects of our current processes for transition in the local area for SEND young people.

Health Transitions

Ready Steady Go work is being completed between health colleagues and Paediatricians at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to look at widening the age range from 12/13 and what young people would need for a smoother transition. A template has also been devised to identify any health needs which may cause issue for a smooth transition and work is being carried out to embed this process within schools, so they are aware of support available. Future work is to be progressed for the 0-4 years cohort and the transition between nursery and school.

Tribunal Data

The table below presents the number of mediation certificates and meetings which have taken place per year since 2019. Mediation is a free way for parents and carers to resolve disputes related to educational, health, and social care issues. It is an informal process where an independent mediator helps parties discuss problems and find resolutions.

If families are unhappy with a decision made by Gateshead Council, they have the right to lodge an appeal. It is important to note that this must be lodged within two months of the decision letter enclosing the final EHCP, or one month from the date of obtaining a mediation certificate, whichever is the later. Families can appeal decisions including:

- Refusal to carry out an EHCP Needs Assessment
- Refusal to issue an EHCP following a Needs Assessment
- Refusal to secure a Re-Assessment of EHCP Needs
- Refusal to amend an EHCP following a Re-Assessment of EHCP Needs
- Refusal to amend an EHCP following an Annual Review
- Disagreement with a Cease to Maintain
- Disagreement with Section B
- Disagreement with Section F
- Disagreement with Section I

To appeal the decisions made above, families have access to the free and impartial support of SENDIAS. They can support with the completion of tribunal applications, attending mediations, giving impartial advice and the submission of evidence.

Year	All Mediation Certificates	All Mediation Meeting	Appealed to Tribunal	Went to Hearing	Ruling in LA's favour
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2019	50	2	34	4	1
2020	36	12	26	4	1 plus one was upheld in part
2021	62	15	40	0	N/A
2022	62	11	51	9	4
2023	98	3	117	37	2
2024	69	7	75	1 thus far	0

Pathways into Education, Employment and Training for those young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Gateshead offers an Interactive digital pathways tool for the local offer to support with informing young people and their families of the opportunities available to them. Through the work of the SEND Youth forum the Learning and Skills students put together an easy read leaflet about transition to adulthood.

Post 16 Strategy

Opportunities are undertaken to provide young people and parents to learn about options and help prepare them to make informed choices and raise aspirations for their adult life. One example of this was a SEND Futures event, which was held in June 2024. Over 150 parents, carers and young people attended the event. The event included 52 market stalls representing statutory and non-statutory services and included representation from the voluntary and community sector.

Gateshead Council's proposed Post-16 Strategy drives education improvements and increases opportunities for young people with SEND. The targeted strategic and operational groups will deliver against the three purposes:

1. increasing participation in lifelong learning, creating an ambitious culture and reducing barriers to participation
2. creating better opportunities for employment and volunteering through collaborative working with partners
3. providing local and regional insight into educational needs and trends and making improvements in the offer and outcomes

The proposed Strategy will focus on provision and outcomes for SEND young people and adults, through better careers guidance, a co-ordinated preparation for employment programme, a co-ordinated transition process between educational providers and a community education offer for young people unable or not yet ready for work.

Peer reviews have been undertaken of post-16 providers in the area to ensure that preparation for adulthood is embedded within the curriculum and increased consistency across the area. There is a co-ordinated approach to SEND post-16 education through collaborative working with

Supported Employment

In 2022, the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) Internships Work Programme launched a new approach to supporting young people with SEND into supported employment. This was in recognition that whilst most people with special educational needs want to work, only 5% are in work.

As part of this work, Gateshead Council, with Learning and Skills as the lead service, have:

- Redesigned and launched a Supported Internship programme for up to 12 young people a year (with SEND) to access a meaningful work placement. In 2023/2024 (the first year of launch) 6 young people participated with 1 already in work. In 2023/2024, 10 young people have signed up to the scheme with Gateshead Council acting as host employer for the placement offer.
- Launched a Supported Employment Forum with local employers, schools and post-16 providers. This will be a regular meeting that will help solve some of the complex issues facing young people with learning disabilities when trying to enter work. It will also strengthen the work placement offer across the borough.
- Improved the collection of data, ensuring there is a collaborative approach and plans to widen the data collection to provide us with more information about destinations of young people with SEND at post 19.

Available Data in relation to Post 16

For the year end 2022-2023 the total cohort for Gateshead 16-18 was 3936. Of this cohort 4.5 % were NEET or not known, compared to a regional average of 5.2%. Of the 211, 16–18-year-olds with special educational needs, 0.6% were NEET.

Rate of those aged 16+ with an EHCP who are not in education, employment or training in the Northeast is 13.3%, Gateshead rate is 6.3% significantly lower than the regional average.

Gateshead Supported Access to Employment Service (GATES)

GATES is a supported employment service based in Adult Social Care. The service is aware of a significant employment gap, with employers expecting more of their employees, and residents with learning disabilities being even further away from the labour market. Newly launched post-Covid, and in a 1-year transition, it provides two services to residents:

1. Supporting Gateshead 14–19-year-olds with an Education Health Care Plan to access useful work placement opportunities that will help them understand the world of work
2. Support Gateshead residents aged 18 and over into volunteering and paid work who meet at least 2 elements of the Care Act.

Working collaboratively with Council services, schools, and with local employers, this provides a co-ordinated approach to transition from year 10 to post-16 with robust vocational profiling into paid work. It is a 'free at the point of entry' service that offers continued support for the life of the employment. Whilst there are no targets for engagement and numbers into jobs in the transition year, these will be introduced once the new service has become established.

TITLE: **Children and Families Service - Annual Report on Compliments, Comments and Complaints - April 2023 to March 2024**

REPORT OF: Alison Routledge, Social Care Complaints Manager

SERVICE: Quality Assurance and Commissioning, Integrated Adults and Social Care Services

SUMMARY

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the procedure that Local Authorities have a responsibility to follow when a complaint is made about Children's Social Services. Regulation 13 (3) of this Act states that all local authorities must publish an Annual Report (1 April to 31 March) to identify the number, detail and outcomes to all complaints received. The information within this Annual Report fulfils Gateshead Council's obligations under this regulation and covers the period between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

1.0 The Statutory Complaints Procedure

- 1.1 This procedure is for all representations received from children and young people, their parents, foster carers, or other qualifying adults about Gateshead Council's Children's Services.
- 1.2 The Statutory Procedure covers complaints about services delivered to children and young people under Part 3 of the 1989 Act and specific functions under Parts 4 and 5 of the Act.
- 1.3 There are three stages to the procedure:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Operational managers investigate Stage 1 complaints. Complaints at this level are expected to be concluded within ten working days, with an extension of further ten working days, (with the agreement of the complainant), if necessary. The maximum time for a Stage 1 investigation is twenty working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

Investigations at Stage 2 are conducted at arm's length to the operational service complained about, with full and formal reporting to the complainant by an Adjudicating Officer, (usually at Service Director level), within twenty-five working days, with extension up to sixty-five working days, if necessary, which must be negotiated with the complainant.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome at Stage 2, the complainant can request that the issues are taken to a Review Panel, (Stage 3). A Stage 3 Review Panel must be requested within twenty working days of receipt of the Stage 2 investigation findings. A Stage 3 Review Panel is the final stage of the statutory complaint's procedure.

2.0 Publicity and Information

- 2.1 Information about the complaint's procedure can be made available in key languages and formats. Requests for information in these formats or from customers with sight or hearing impairment are provided via the Council's Communication Team.
- 2.2 There is also a leaflet for children and young people receiving a service. This leaflet was designed with help from the children and young people from One Voice, the Children and the Young People's Forum. The leaflet includes a pre-paid slip that can be completed and posted back free of charge.
- 2.3 When young people are admitted into Local Authority care, part of the 20-day review requirements state that they are to be visited by the Council's Children's Rights Officer. The young person also receives a 'Welcome' pack', which includes information, leaflets and other guidance on how to make a complaint.
- 2.4 The Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitors and Independent Reviewing Officers are important links between the child and the Complaints Manager and ensure that any issues of dissatisfaction are resolved at the earliest opportunity.

3.0 The Independent Element

- 3.1 Under the complaint's procedure, there is a requirement to provide Independent Persons for all Stage 2 complaints. There is currently a reciprocal consortium arrangement with South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council and Sunderland City Council, which provides Independent People for Children Act 1989 complaints. There is also a requirement to ensure that Stage 3 Review Panels consist of three members who are fully independent of the Council. Review Panels are independently organised and administered by Legal and Democratic Services.

4.0 Advocacy and Special Needs

- 4.1 The purpose of advocacy in complaints procedures is to ensure that children and young people are given assistance when making or intending to make a complaint. Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are fully considered and reflected in decision-making about their own lives. It is a legal requirement that any child or young person wishing to make a complaint must always be offered the services of an advocate.

5.0 Training and Employee Development

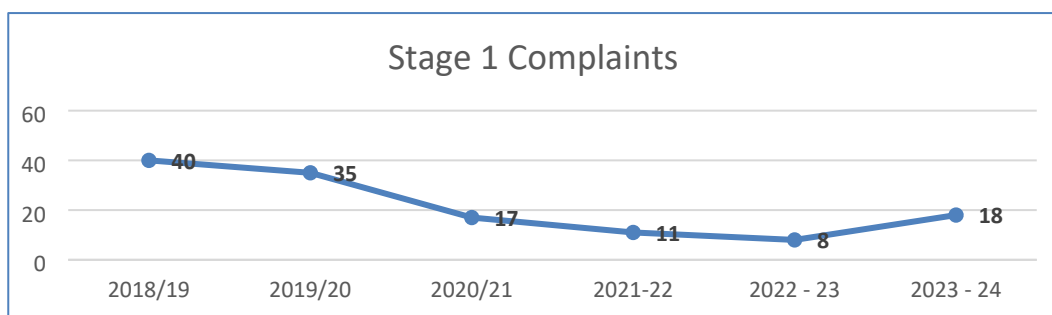
- 5.1 Training for Investigating Officers is undertaken on an annual basis. All investigating skills training courses are commissioned from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LG&SCO). This ensures that investigating officers are trained to the Ombudsman's investigation standard with the focus being on swift resolution, proportionate investigations, and appropriate redress.
- 5.2 An LG&SCO Investigating Skills Training Course was arranged for April 2023. All current and new managers across Children's Services operational teams are invited to attend. The Council also undertake additional training and guidance on the internal complaints procedure followed by Gateshead Council with all Children's Services managers. This additional training reinforces the requirement to carry out robust investigations across all stages of the procedure along with the importance of meeting statutory timescales.

6.0 Complaints from Children in Residential Facilities

- 6.1 All children's residential homes have their own "in-house" complaints process to resolve low level concerns. Residential staff work with the young person and allow them to identify themselves how their issues can be resolved to their satisfaction. Information about low level concerns is retained within the home and is available in the event of OFSTED inspections.

7.0 All Representations Received over the Past Three Years

Representations	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Stage 1 Complaints	11	8	18
Stage 2 Complaints	0	4	0
Stage 3 - Review Panels	3	3	0
Comments	3	1	0
Corporate Complaints	19	10	10
Complaint related queries	26	23	39
Data Issues	15	8	4
Safeguarding Partnership Complaints	0	2	1
Insurance Claims	5	1	2
LGO Referrals	6	8	5
MP Enquiry	0	4	1
Total	88	72	80
Compliments	99	125	145
All Representations Received	187	197	225
Trend	-13.02%	5.35%	14.21%



7.1 Key Points of Interest

- The number of formal contacts received citing dissatisfaction about Children's Services increased by 11% (80) compared with the number of dissatisfaction contacts received during 2022/23, (72).
- However, compared with all dissatisfaction during 2023/24, (80), 64% (145) of all Children's Services contacts were compliments.
- Compared with both corporate and statutory complaints, compliments accounted for 84% (145) of referrals.
- Children's Services received 18 Stage 1 complaints during 2023/24. This is a 125% increase on Stage 1 complaints received during 2022/23, (8).
- There was no overall reason for the increase in complaints. However, this number is more in line with the number of complaints received over previous years.
- 44% (8) of complaints related to the quality of services provided.
- Only one statutory complaint was received regarding the attitude or conduct of workers. After a full investigation, this complaint was found to be unjustified.
- 56% (10) of complaints were regarding the support provided by individual workers or services. This includes areas about financial support for SGO holders.
- The number of complaint related queries (low-level issues not requiring a written response) increased by 70% compared to those received during 2022/23 (39 from 23).
- 38% (15) of complaint related queries received were about the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. Issues included allegations of bias towards a particular parent, families unhappy with information within assessments or other reports, some of which were filed in court. Some low level issues were around the communication from individual members of staff.

- All complaint related queries received about Children’s Social Care were resolved informally by either the team manager of the service complained about or by the Complaints Section after prior discussion with the manager concerned.
- In all cases, the complainant can escalate their issue to a formal complaint. However, only one low level issue moved to a formal complaint and was about financial support following a SGO order.
- There were no complaints registered at Stage 2 of the complaint’s procedure during 2023/24. Stage 2 is the progression from a Stage 1 complaint. The issues remain the same but require a more in depth investigation with oversight by an Independent Person.
- There were also no Stage 3 Review Panels held during this time.

7.2 Specific Areas of Statutory Complaints

Service Area	2021 2022		2022 2023		2023 2024	
Children in Our Care	27.27%	3	37.50%	3	29.41%	5
Children with Disabilities	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	35.29%	6
Integrated Referral Team	27.27%	3	37.50%	3	17.65%	3
Safeguarding, Care Planning	36.36%	4	25.00%	2	17.65%	3
Safeguarding Children Unit	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	29.41%	0
Total		11		8		18

- 18% (3) of all statutory complaints received were in respect of services provided by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. This is an increase of one complaint compared with the number that were received in 2022/23.
- It should be noted that most children receiving a service are allocated a social worker from the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.
- 18% (3) of complaints were regarding the services provided by the Integrated Referral Team.
- There was no key theme identified from complaints about the Integrated Referral Team, issues ranged from disputes about information within reports or assessments, the quality of support offered to families, disputes to information within assessments or about issues around social workers not enforcing directions of the courts. From the two complaints responded to, one was closed due to the issues relating to a Court decision and one was partially upheld.
- 29% (5) of complaints received were regarding services provided by the Children in our Care Teams. This is a 67% increase on the number received during 2022/23 (3).
- Three complaints about the Cared for Children Team were about quality of service, including staff support or about issues around SGO payments.
- After investigation, four complaints were partially upheld, and one complaint was fully upheld. All recommendations and improvements from the complaints are detailed within this report.

7.3 Issues linked to the complaint.

Main Complaint Issues	2021 2022		2022 2023		2023 2024	
Delay	0.00%	0	12.50%	1	0.00%	0
Lack of Service	18.18%	2	25.00%	2	44.44%	8
Quality of Service	54.55%	6	62.50%	5	44.44%	8
Refusal of Service	18.18%	2	0.00%	0	5.56%	1
Staff Issues	9.09%	1	0.00%	0	5.56%	1
Total		11		8		18

- There was only one complaint at Stage 1 regarding allegations of inappropriate staff conduct. This complaint was about the alleged actions of the worker, in particular about the refusal by the social worker to return the case to court. The complaint was fully investigated and found to be unjustified.
- In all cases, should complaints be received where there is evidence that workers have acted inappropriately or failed to follow processes or procedures, the matter is always

shared with senior managers and addressed directly with the member of staff concerned. Appropriate and proportionate measures are then taken to reduce the risk of any similar situations occurring.

- Quality of Service remained the key theme of all complaints received. 44% (8) of complaints received were regarding the quality of the services provided.
- Quality of service includes:
 - Missed or late social work visits.
 - Contact visits that are cancelled at very short notice.
 - Conflicting or incorrect information by workers.
 - Allegations of poor support from the services involved in individual cases.
 - Poor communication between the workers and family members.
- After investigation, only one complaint about quality of service was fully justified. Five were partially justified. Two complaints were closed as one had been informally resolved and one was in relation to a court decision.

7.4 Themes of Statutory Complaints Received

After full consideration of all Stage 1 complaints received during 2023/24, only one key theme of dissatisfaction was identified.

7.4.1 Quality or lack of support from individuals or the Service

During 2023/24, 56% (10) complaints were received about support from individuals or the overall service to families of children receiving a service. Two of these complaints included issues around communication and the lack of action from the workers involved in a child / children's case.

One complainant alleged that their child was placed on a child protection plan as the social worker hadn't taken allegations about a parent seriously enough to act against them until the situation was felt to warrant escalation. This complaint was partially upheld after investigation. However, the main issues about failure to act were not upheld.

One complaint about the quality of support from a worker or service was about a cared for young person. The issues relate to services provided to parents rather than the young person. The complaint raised issues about the quality of the communication, the lack of sharing of relevant information about the young person and disputed actions in relation to case management. This complaint was partially upheld, and recommendations identified. However, it has since moved to Stage 2 of the procedure.

One complaint related to alleged misinformation by the social worker which led to allegations of bias against the children's father. The complaint was partially upheld as there were found to be missed opportunities for effective communication. However, the elements of complaints about bias were not upheld.

One complaint was about misinformation given by the social worker in relation to financial support after a Special Guardianship order was granted. The complainant disputed the outcome after a financial review as they felt that the removal of support would cause significant hardship to the child concerned. The complaint was partially upheld as all information had been considered. However, it was felt that communication could have been improved upon and as such, it was agreed that the financial support should be reinstated and that in future it will be subject to regular reviews in line with the funding process and that any decisions will be immediately communicated to the care giver.

One complaint was regarding issues about the commissioning of an appropriate service for a disabled young person. It was found once the service was commissioned, which included elements of personal care, that the provider was not CQC registered. This raised issues about the communication and decisions taken by the service to allow the provider to take on the care package at the time. This complaint was upheld after investigation and recommendations for both Children's Services and Commissioning identified.

Other complaints included issues about cancelled appointments at short notice and the lack of regular updates on children's cases to relevant family members.

After investigation, 63% (5) complaints were found to be partially upheld, 13% (1) was fully upheld and 25% (2) were closed. One was informally resolved, and one was closed due to no response to contact. Three complaints remain outstanding.

After consideration of these concerns, it continues to be an issue that families of children receiving a service may misinterpret the reasons for assessments that are undertaken and often feel that assessment outcome is biased in favour of either parent. All social workers are trained to undertake objective assessments and to reflect the family situation to the best of their professional judgement given the information and allegations presented by both parties and it is unfortunate that this does sometimes cause allegations of bias against the worker or service.

7.5 Statutory Complaints Outcomes

Outcomes of complaints	2021 2022		2022 2023		2023 2024	
Outstanding			2		3	
Not upheld	45%	5	50.00%	3	6.67%	1
Partially upheld	27%	3	16.67%	1	46.67%	7
Upheld	0.00%	0	33.33%	2	13.33%	2
Informal Resolution	27%	3	0.00%	0	26.67%	4
Closed or Withdrawn	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	6.67%	1
Total		11		8		18

- In 2023/24, 47% (7) of complaints were partially upheld after investigation.
- 47% (7) complaints were partially justified. Partially justified highlights that the main issue of complaint was found to be unjustified, but there were areas where the service could have performed better, for example communication, delays in returning calls or late/missed visits.
- After investigation, only one complaint was found to be fully justified.
- 27% (4) of complaints were informally resolved after intervention from the services concerned. In all cases the complainant was satisfied that their complaint had been successfully resolved.
- In each case where it is found that there had been some fault by the service, the complainant will always receive a written apology within their response letter. The Investigating Officer will also be expected to identify ways in which the service can improve and ensure that these recommendations are progressed by the service.

7.6 Timescales for Responding to Statutory Complaints

Complaints Completed within 20 Working Days	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024
Resolved	4	1	5
Not Resolved	2	5	13

- The statutory timescale for Stage 1 resolution is ten working days. This can be extended to twenty working days with the complainant's agreement.
- From the 15 complaints responded to, only five were completed within twenty working days.
- This evidences that only 28% (5) of complaints met the extended timescale of twenty working days.
- As several complaints now include additional areas or complex issues, it is difficult to meet such tight timescales for resolution, whilst also ensuring a thorough and robust response. However, the Investigating Officers is expected to maintain contact with the complainant to keep them updated on the progress of investigation.
- Prompts for investigation updates are sent on a weekly basis by the Complaints Team to all investigating officers, (and their line managers) undertaking investigations to request updates on the progress of investigation. If the complaint is overdue, the Practice Lead

is then informed and will be requested to make arrangements for the complaint to be finalised and completed.

8.0 Stage 2 and 3 Complaints

Stage 2 Complaints	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024
	0	4	0
Stage 3 Review Panels Held	3	3	0

- There were no Stage 2 requests during 2023/24. There were also no Stage 3 Review Panels held during this period.

9.0 How Statutory Complaints Were Received

Method of Complaint	2021 2022	2022 2023	2023 2024
Complaint Form – Online	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
E - mail	54.55% 6	100.00% 8	83.33% 15
Children’s Complaints Leaflet	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
In Person	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Letter	9.09% 1	0.00% 0	5.56% 1
Telephone	27.27% 3	0.00% 0	11.11% 2
Total	11	8	18

- Email continues to be the main method of complaint referral accounting for 83% (15) of all statutory complaints received. Email also accounted for four corporate complaints received.
- Emails and letters tend to raise multiple areas of complaint. Therefore, it is important that an Investigating Officer speaks with the complainant at the earliest opportunity to identify the key issues of concern and to highlight areas that are not able to be responded to or are outside of the remit of the complaint’s procedure.
- Statutory complaints brought by relatives with parental responsibility accounted for 78% (14) of all complaint referrals.
- One statutory complaint was raised by a child in our care via their advocate. The complaint was about placement issues and a disputed move to another placement. The complaint was investigated, and plans put in place to include regular reviews of the current placement.
- Children and young people receiving a service have recourse to the Council’s Children’s Rights Officer. The Children’s Rights Officer and Independent Reviewing Officers empower children and young people to use the complaints procedure when necessary. However, both the Children’s Right Officer and the Independent Reviewing Officer are often able to resolve issues successfully.

10.0 Equalities Monitoring

- Gateshead Council recognises that equality monitoring of service delivery is crucial for effective planning and scrutiny of the services that it provides. This monitoring can identify which groups are using services and gauge their level of satisfaction. The information can then be used to highlight possible inequalities, investigate their underlying causes, and address any unfairness or disadvantage. However, as complainants tend to be from relatives, it is not possible to collect this information with any accuracy as diversity forms sent out were not routinely returned despite the forms being made simpler to complete in 2022/23.
- During 2023/24, there was one complaint and two low level issues where the complainant was a member of the BAME community. Two compliments were also received.
- Information about the complaints process can be made available in key languages and formats. Information for customers with sight, hearing or learning difficulties can also be provided.

11.0 Corporate Complaints Received

Between 2023/2024, Children's Services received ten Corporate Complaints. Corporate Complaints are from those who do not have parental responsibility, or issues relating to Child Protection matters, LADO issues and Targeted Support / Specialist Support. Corporate Complaints are outside of the statutory procedure and follow the Council's Corporate Complaint Procedure.

Corporate Complaint - Service Area	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024
Integrated Referral Team	6	2	0
Children in our Care	3	1	0
CWD	0	0	1
Early Help / Specialist Support	3	2	2
Safeguarding & Care Planning	1	3	5
Safeguarding Children Unit	6	2	0
SAR Team	0	0	1
Travel Care Team	0	0	1
Total	19	10	10

Corporate Complaint - Main Element	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024
Delay	0	0	1
Lack of Service	1	3	2
Quality of Service	11	4	5
Refusal	5	0	0
Staff Conduct / Actions	2	3	2
Total	19	10	10

Corporate Complaints - Outcome	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024
Not Upheld	17	8	5
Partially Upheld	1	0	2
Fully Upheld	1	1	0
Withdrawn / Closed	0	1	3
Total Completed	19	10	10

Five complaints responded to via the Corporate Complaint Procedure were about quality of service. Three of these complaints were regarding disputes to decisions made, which included disputes over the closing of a case by Targeted Family Support. The family had felt that the service should continue up until the young person's eighteenth birthday. However, it was found that support would only be provided should a need continue to be identified. The complaint was not upheld. One complaint was regarding a dispute to court action when their grandchild was removed from their placement with a family friend. Again, this complaint was not upheld as decisions had been taken in line with legal obligations.

Other issue relates to disputes about contact arrangements with extended family members or about communication by workers or the service.

One corporate complaint was about services provided by the Travel Care Team when a taxi had failed to turn up to take a disabled child to school. It was identified that there had been a breakdown in communication with the provider and as such the complaint was upheld. Several recommendations to prevent this situation from occurring again were then implemented.

After investigation, five corporate complaints were not upheld, two were partially upheld and three were either informally resolved or withdrawn.

12.0 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Referrals

During 2023/24, Children's Services received five Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) referrals.

LG&SCO Referrals - Service Area	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Children in our Care	2	2	0
Children with Disabilities	1	1	0
Integrated Referral Team	0	0	1
Safeguarding & Care Planning	3	4	2
Safeguarding Children Unit / LADO	0	1	1
Targeted Family Support	0	0	1
Total	6	8	5

LG&SCO Outcomes	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Closed - No Further Action	3	3	5
Closed - LA Remedy Appropriate	1	2	0
Outside LG&SCO Jurisdiction	1	1	0
Closed – Out of Time (12 months)	0	1	0
Fault Causing Injustice	1	1	0
	6	8	5

In all cases, information was provided by the Council to allow the Ombudsman to consider the issues raised. Following this, all five referrals were subsequently closed by the Ombudsman after initial enquiries.

13.0 Learning from Complaints

- 13.1 At the end of every investigation, the investigating officer is responsible for identifying any improvements or recommendations resulting from the complaint. Changes can include policy, procedure, or staff development.
- 13.2 Complaints about individual practice or failure to follow procedures are dealt with by reinforcement of processes and reiterating customer care standards through service / team meetings or individual supervision sessions. In addition to this, if it is felt that additional or refresher training is required for either workers or teams, this will be progressed by the relevant team manager.
- 13.3 In respect of complaints about staff attitude or conduct, if it is found that an employee has deliberately acted inappropriately, the issue will be dealt with in line with internal employment procedures.
- 13.4 Children's Services have recently developed a Quality Assurance process via the Quality Assurance Strategic Group which allows the Services to consider recommendations and improvements identified from all complaints that have been responded to. The process monitors any agreed recommendations to ensure that they are implemented within a timely manner, and to ensure that learning from complaints is shared across all Children's Services Teams.
- 13.5 **Improvements to service identified following a complaint:**

One Stage 2 complaint was also responded to during 1 July and 30 September 2023. This complaint related to several areas within Children's Services.

Action: A Stage 2 complaint was responded to during 1 July and 30 September 2023. This complaint related to several areas within Children's Services involvement with the family. Overall, the complainant felt that due to the actions of

the workers involved, he had been prevented from having the children in his care and, that due to actions and bias by the workers, he had been prevented from having contact. Issues raised were regarding alleged parental alienation, bias, not checking specific court orders, which had been used by the mother to reinforce her decisions about contact.

The complaint had several issues. Although, it would be standard practice to theme the areas complained about, due to the needs of the complainant, it was felt that each area raised should be responded to separately to evidence that every area of complaint had been considered and responded to. Some areas of the complaint were upheld. However, most of the issues raised were found to be unjustified or unsubstantiated.

Improvements:

- That when a parent claims that there is a court order in place that prevents contact between children and an absent parent, social workers should verify this statement and, where necessary, check the document for themselves. Following this an email was sent to all staff to inform of this requirement. This instruction has since been disseminated to all Children's Services staff.
- That training on non-molestation orders should be provided for all Children's Services staff to ensure that they fully understand what this type of order covers and what restrictions may apply. This requirement has since been added to the Court Skills Training and is now delivered via an e learning module.
- As the investigation evidenced that staff interviewed did not have the required knowledge of parental alienation, training on parental alienation is now be provided for Children's Services staff to assist them in supporting parents where this is a potential issue. This has also been added to the Court Skills Training and is delivered via an e learning module.
- That all managers and Social Work Staff should ensure that details of any meetings, which often include parents/family members, are clearly recorded on Mosaic. The record should always include relevant information regarding why the meeting was held and should note any decisions that were made. An email was shared with Practice Leads with a request that this information is disseminated to all social work staff, to ensure that this takes place in future.

Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams

Action: A complaint received where it was alleged that all those with PR had not been enabled to have their voices heard during the assessment process. It was also identified that only one parent had received copies of relevant documentation, including Safety Plans which evidenced that they had not been sent to all those with PR. An additional concern within the complaint identified that there had been communication issues between the service and the complainant.

Improvements:

Instructions were shared with all Practice Leads with a request that the following was disseminated amongst their team members:

- That all workers within Children's Social Care must share a copy of the safety plan, or other assessments undertaken with all those who have PR. This will ensure that parents and others with PR are informed about any work or decisions that are ongoing.
- Also, in cases where the worker is required to liaise with those with PR, it is important that they do attempt to contact them by the most convenient means, generally this will be by telephone, but if they are unable to make contact, alternative means such as email or text must be considered.

Action: A complaint was investigated where it was found that a significant email from a family member had not been placed on the case file. The information within the email was in respect of a potential risk to a young child. As the email had not been recorded on the case record it was unclear whether any action had been taken following receipt of the information.

Improvement: Practice Leads instructed their team managers to share within their own teams that all social workers must always ensure that any significant emails from parents or carers along with any service response to the information provided are placed on the child / children's case file at the earliest opportunity.

Children in our Care

Action: A complaint arose following a significant medical emergency in relation to a cared for young person. It was found that information about the incident, along with advice about the hospital / ward that the young person had been admitted to, was not shared in a timely manner with his mum. Although there were circumstances that impacted on mum being informed of this, the service did admit that the delay caused her additional worry.

The service admitted the delay and the lack of communication and, as an outcome, provided the complainant with a personalised letter of apology which set out the agreed plan for future communication with the family.

Improvements:

- That the parent will receive monthly updates over the phone from the Social Worker allocated to the case and that any updates on the young person's care or wellbeing will be shared with them as soon as possible. This has since been implemented and updates take place on a monthly basis.
- The Social Worker and Team Manager will provide a personalised written apology by 9th June 2023. An apology letter was sent to the parent on 8th June 2023.
- That the young person will be spoken to, to obtain permission to share information with his mother about individual roles of professionals working with him. Following this, the young person was spoken to and advised that he did not want anyone to speak to his mother about any specific work with other professionals.
- That the allocated IRO will contact the parent following the young person's reviews to give a general update on what has been discussed. This is now implemented and takes place following reviews.
- That the service will take forward the issues around the young person's school regarding a move to a different school. The social worker is actively pursuing this on young person's behalf.
- Information about the importance of regular communication with parents or others about children or young people cared for by the Council, was shared across the Children in our Care Service within team meetings and individual supervisions.

Action: The complaint was in respect of financial support for an SGO holder along with the quality of communication by the Kinship Team when requesting updates in respect of this matter. The complainant disputed the outcome of the financial assessment as it was felt that this would cause financial hardship to the family. The complainant was also unhappy as the letter did not outline how to appeal the financial decision.

Improvements:

- As an outcome to this complaint, it was recommended that the financial support was reinstated and backdated to the point that it was stopped. Information has now been given to enable the complainant to formally appeal the decision.
- The letter, which is sent to families following financial assessments / decisions for SGO holders has now been updated to include information about how to appeal.
- That the support and information regarding Kinship Care would be shared with the family. This has now been completed by the Team Manager of Kinship Care.

- A worker has been allocated to the family as their point of contact and will carry out regular visits to go over what the family are entitled to as SGO connected carer and to discuss what support and guidance is required to meet the family's needs.
- All actions have since been implemented and visits undertaken. The nominated worker is now in regular contact with the family and can resolve issues or queries as they arise.

Children in our Care

Action: A complaint was investigated which set out concerns about a commissioned service, procured for a young person who required some personal care tasks. Following the commissioning of the service, it was found that the provider was not registered with the CQC, which is a requirement when personal care tasks are carried out. The care package was immediately suspended. Within the complaint, there were also elements of poor communication by the service in relation to updates to the family on the progress of the care package.

Improvements:

- Commissioning and social work staff within the Children with Disabilities Team are now actively working together to ensure that when young people require a commissioned service, should they require personal care tasks, that in all cases the commissioned provider is CQC registered. Also, this will ensure that all relevant documentation is kept up to date to enable potential care providers to consider whether they are able to meet the needs of the young person concerned.
- It has been agreed that the social worker will contact all families waiting for a service on a fortnightly basis with an update, unless contact has already been achieved through other means such as CIN Reviews and Care Team meetings.
- That commissioning profiles for children and young people are regularly updated to ensure that the profile is kept up to date and current, in particular when in relation to the care needs and care tasks that will be required as part of the care package.

Child Protection Unit

Action: Following a complaint from a new parent in relation to Child Protection action being taken due to the circumstances of the child's birth, an issue was raised regarding the refusal to allow the parent to take a hair strand test. It was felt by the worker that the tests could only be provided when a letter of proceedings had been issued or during other legal action. This information was subsequently found to be incorrect.

Improvement: Following the investigation, it was agreed that, in future, Children's Services should consider the use of hair strand testing on a case-by-case basis following requests. This instruction was shared across all Practice Leads within an email from the Principal Social Worker. Practice Leads were asked to disseminate this information across all social work teams / staff. This was completed on 15 September 2023.

14.0 Compliments

- 14.1 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, Children's Services received 145 compliments about either individual workers or teams. This means that compared with the number of statutory and corporate complaints received during 2023/24, (27), 84% (145) were compliments about Children's Services.

Children's Social & Supporting Services	Total	%
Children and Families Business Support Team	8	5.52%
Childrens Residential	1	0.69%
Children in our Care Teams	5	3.45%
Contextual Safeguarding Team	2	1.38%
Children with Disabilities - Respite - Grove House	31	21.38%

Children with Disabilities Team	5	3.45%
Domestic Violence and Abuse Team	8	5.52%
Emergency Duty Team - Childrens	2	1.38%
Family Hubs & Play Service	10	6.90%
Fostering Team	1	0.69%
Integrated Referral Team	8	5.52%
Kinship Care	1	0.69%
Safeguarding, Care Planning Teams	22	15.17%
Safeguarding Children Unit	8	5.52%
Supporting Children & Family Team	1	0.69%
Specialist Support Team	2	1.38%
Targeted Family Support	20	13.79%
Youth Justice Team	6	4.14%
Travel Care Team - Childrens	4	2.76%
Total	145	

14.2 Examples of compliments received.

Integrated Referral Team

"We've just had the foster carer review for PR, carer for MR and I wanted to share P's positive feedback about ER - P could not speak highly enough about the support given, including the regular communication and updates, quick responses to questions, advocating for M and keeping her experience and needs central. This support is really appreciated by P, and in turn by me as her E's Supervising Social Worker."

"To D.. We just wanted to say a HUGE thank you for everything you have done for us. Love D, C. and L. x."

Children in our Care

"Good afternoon. In an age where criticism can be more common than positive comments, I felt it important that I send you this email. L.D is, in my opinion, doing a fab job. She is always quick to respond to my emails; when she says she is going to do something, she does, and she is always so supportive and proactive when I have communicated concerns or emailed/called to ask for advice. Like I say, we are often too quick to criticise, but not today! I hope you are able to pass this on to her and congratulate her on the hard work she is doing. Many thanks and happy Friday. Mrs R F."

"Morning C. This is just to feedback positive comments made by both S and W during my visit yesterday about your involvement with S. who feel listened to by you, that you are available when needed and W is impressed about your overall involvement with S. They both sang your praises throughout my visit. Will record this under good practice, as I think it all excellent people' skills."

Children's Business Support

"I just wanted to make you aware of A-M going out of her way to support one of our care leavers yesterday. A young person presented as homeless and was upset in reception. A-M was able to calm him down and arranged for the duty worker to come and see him. Unfortunately, Housing was unable to offer anything appropriate. A-M contacted a provision she was aware of, and it was possible to make arrangements for the young man to stay there. This was a much better outcome and resolved the issue thanks to A-M. This is just one example of A-M going over and above for our care leavers and I felt this should be acknowledged."

I have just signed off the Minutes you did for the H.. children - what a pleasure to read! Thank you for being so good at what you do - it makes it a joy to read through. Kind Regards, LG"

Children with Disabilities - Grove House Respite

"K called in to drop of thank you card, some chocolate treats and £100 donation to the children's amenities account. The card read as follows: 'Page 71 all staff and young people at Grove House. Thank you for all my lovely visits to your home. I've seen some excellent work and practice and I

know how hard you all work to make sure each young person has a lovely time at grove house. You are all amazing! Keep up the good work. I will miss my monthly visits which have always been a pleasure. All the very best, love K xx" This is a little treat for young people. Please buy something they would like (I thought it would be more useful than easter eggs! Love K".

"During K's TAF meeting we discussed her social interaction and experiences at Grove House. The whole cohort across school, social worker and mum all gave Grove House 10/10 rating, which all said they don't ever give. Mum was asked if she was happy and if she thought there was anything we could do outside her social experiences which she isn't getting at home. Mum said she is happy as at home she doesn't get out as much and loves the fact she goes to the park and uses the equipment as this is something she struggles with at home. Lots of praise for the service and the experiences K...has here. Nothing she would change mum said."

Children with Disabilities Team

"Dear H., This is just a small token of our deep appreciation for all the tremendous help you give us with Y.. - we are very grateful to you. Wish you an enjoyable and restful holiday from Y & N. H"

"I thought I would share the text message I received from parent (DP) who I supported with attending a hospital appointment for their child (AM) who was having an operation today (08/02/2024) at the RVI. " Thanks D.. and thank you again for today. I don't know how I'd have made it that little bit less stressful for him dealing with taxis and things in this weather with the traffic. I really appreciate your help and all your support for me also during the day." A. had a successful operation and is home safe and sound with his mum and siblings."

Child Protection Team

"I would like to comment on how well S.. managed LT's ICPC yesterday. S. ensured the families focus was on L. at all times and this helped to reduce the risk of any conflict. These adults have a lot of history where conflict and violence has been a feature. So well done. I would also like to pass on D.. positive comments about how the ICPC went. D.. said "S.. is passionate and he made me feel comfortable".

Family Hubs and Play Service

Hi there, thank you for providing us with a service by such a fantastic team member. H.. is great she goes above and beyond to make sure everyone's happy. Can't recommend her enough as she's doing such an amazing job every Tuesday 10 till 12. From me personally and on behalf of Dunston Community Centre we all thank you again, would like to praise her work and felt we needed to let you all know that she's just brilliant and we love having her. M..

Targeted Family Support – DAT

"To K.. Just a little note to say how grateful I am for all the amazing work you have done in supporting me through the most difficult time I have ever experienced, Thank you for always being at the end of the phone, thanks for all your work with the orders and policing matters and thank you for all the help in getting me and the children to where we are now. The work you and the team do, does not get the recognition you all deserve, I always talk about the amazing work you do, and I know I wouldn't be where I am now without it. You are fabulous at what you do, and I will never forget what you have given me - the strength to say 'enough, no more'. You have enabled me to begin a new chapter which I'm sure will be a happy one and every time I smile, I'll remember you. Thanks so much, L x (Thanks to J.. too for the way he presented the freedom project)."

"Just emailing to say how much I have appreciated the help and support I've received from the Domestic Abuse Team since 2020. You are all amazing and very passionate in giving all the help and support that's needed. I would like to extend my thanks further to you as I could not have got through this court process without you. You have been my rock and helped me and stepped in when I've needed you no matter what time of day and for that I'm truly grateful. Just having someone to talk things through with makes all the difference. I hope this horrible journey I've been on has now come to an end and myself and my girls can have a happy life. But a little sad I know longer have you, but I do know I can contact you anytime. I'm so happy I got the outcome I thought I would never get. Onwards and upwards now I can finally box this experience off in my head and

guide A to do the same Thank you, L.”

Specialist Support Teams

“I just wanted to pass on my sincerest thanks to G.. and the work he has done with L.A. G's dedication to his role as L.A's YOT worker has been incredible, and he has gone above and beyond to ensure L.A and his family have been supported throughout this whole process. His genuine care for L.A and his family is evident and something the multi-disciplinary team within Aycliffe have all commented on. I have been at Aycliffe for twenty years and G. is one of the very best, if not the best, YOT workers I had the pleasure to work with. G.. seems like a very humble man so I am sure he will be mortified that I have sent this email. Kind Regards S.. Manager, Aycliffe Secure Centre.”

Fostering Team

“Mr B was full of praise for the help and support he received from R.. in the past before he got SGO of his grandson. He wanted me to pass this on to make you aware.”

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

“To Y. C and the team Thank you for our lovely experience it couldn't have went better. It's been lovely getting to know you, love from S.. N.. and A.. xx

“To E.S. Thank you so much for all the time you put into this lovely book for A, We're really grateful. We loved reading it and A loves looking at the pictures. It's already helping us to do early stage life story work. We love its honest approach and simple language, and the way people are brought to life and A's different family parts brought together. Thank you so much again for this important bit of life story work - we will always be grateful to you for the time you spent putting it together”.

Supporting Children and Families Team

“Hi P.. this is L.... I just want to say thank you for taking me to see my dad and that the visits meant the world to me. Especially since if you didn't do this for me, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to make memories that I'll cherish forever with my dad. Unfortunately, he passed away from a heart attack which you most likely already know. However, we both appreciate what you've done for us. Thank you for giving me memories which I wouldn't have if it weren't for you. I'll never forget what you've done for me and him :) ”

Travel Care Team – Children's

“ I just want to praise J.W on her help with me and R. R really doesn't deal with change and I'm trying my best to keep him in Carr Hill school as he is really struggling with moving J. went over and beyond to help me and I can't thank her enough she is a real asset to your team and made one little boy very happy thanks from our hearts, C.M.”

Youth Justice Service

“On behalf of Y... and myself we wanted to put into writing how delighted we were to have been involved in such a positive End Panel It truly showed how effective a Referral Order can be when a dedicated and highly professional Case Manager along with others puts into practice, sessions which in turn provides the young person with the motivation towards a better future This was, in our opinion, what T... expressed Our communication with T... case manager was exemplary from communication of review dates to the outcome of the end panel Congratulations to all concerned Two very proud Panel Members HD & Y B.”

Contact Officer: Alison Routledge, X2408

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Date: 5 September 2024

TITLE OF REPORT: Children and Families Service - Annual Report on Services
Complaints, Compliments and Representations - April 2023 to March
2024

REPORT OF: Andrea Houlahan, Deputy Strategic Director, Social Care, and Lifelong
Learning.

Summary

Cabinet considered the attached report on 25 June 2023.

Cabinet approved the referral of the report to a meeting of the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee in line with procedure.

It is a statutory requirement that the report is considered by a formal committee to ensure the Council has an effective complaints procedure that follows the legislation set out in The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

Background

1. The Health & Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003 requires that Councils with Social Services responsibilities produce an Annual Report of their Statutory Children's Services Complaints Procedure. This annual report sets out details of the complaints and representations made during the period April 2023 – March 2024.
2. Information contained in the report provides a summary of the statistical information together with a review of the effectiveness of the procedure. Some examples of service improvement are also included together with details of future objectives.

Annual Report Complaints and Representations

3. The report is consistent with all five priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan 23 - 28.
4. The Annual Report is specifically about Children Act 1989 Statutory Complaints about Children's Social Care Services, with information on complaint related queries and compliments that are received about staff or services. The report covers the period from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

Operation of the Procedure

5. The procedure has three stages:
 - **Stage 1 Local Resolution** – response within 10 working days. The timescale can be extended to 20 working days if the complainant agrees to this extension.
 - **Stage 2 Investigation** – formal response within 25 calendar days. Extensions to this must be negotiated with the complainant. The maximum is 65 working days.
 - **Stage 3 Independent Review** – Panel consisting of Independent Chair and Independent Panel members who consider the complaint. Full response by Assistant Strategic Director of Social Services within 20 working days.

Statistical Analysis

6. In 2023/24 the number of complaints and representations dealt with was as follows:

The number of formal contacts received citing dissatisfaction about Children's Services increased by 11% (80) compared with the number of dissatisfaction contacts received during 2022/23, (72).

Children's Services received eighteen Stage 1 complaints during 2023/24. This is up from eight Stage 1 complaints in 2022/23.

During 2023/24, 56% (10) complaints were received about support from workers or the overall service to families of children receiving a service.

In 2023/24, 47% (7) of all complaints were partially upheld after investigation.

47% (7) complaints were partially justified. Partially justified highlights that the main issue of complaint was found to be unjustified, but there were areas where the service could have performed better, for example communication, delays in returning calls or late/missed visits.

After investigation, only one complaint was found to be fully justified.

27% (4) of complaints were informally resolved after intervention from the services concerned. In all cases the complainant was satisfied that their complaint had been successfully resolved.

The number of complaint related queries (low-level issues not requiring a written response) increased by 70% compared to those received during 2022/23 (39 from 23).

This evidences that Children's Services are committed to resolve concerns at the lowest level where possible.

There were no complaints registered at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure during 2023/24. Stage 2 is the progression from a Stage 1 complaint. The issues remain the same but require a more in depth investigation by an Investigating Officer outside of the service complained about, with oversight by an external Independent Person.

There were also no Stage 3 Review Panels held during this time.

During 2023/24, Children's Services received 145 compliments about either individual workers or teams. This means that compared with the number of statutory and corporate complaints received during 2023/24, (27), 84% (145) were compliments about Children's Services.

Points of Interest

7. The following key points may be of interest:

Complaints brought by relatives of children receiving a service accounted for 78% (14) of all complaint referrals.

One complaint was raised directly by a cared for young person. This complaint was regarding placement issues. The complaint was investigated, and plans put in place to include regular reviews of the current placement.

Children and young people receiving a service have recourse to the Council's Children's Rights Officer. The Children's Rights Officer works closely with those who raise concerns and, in most cases, can resolve these successfully.

18% (3) of all statutory complaints received were in respect of services provided by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. This is an increase of one complaint compared with the number that were received in 2022/23. However, most children and young people receiving a service are allocated a social worker within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.

29% (5) of complaints received were regarding services provided by the Children in our Care Teams. This is a 67% increase on the number received during 2022/23 (3).

18% (3) of complaints were regarding the services provided by the Integrated Referral Team.

During 2023/24, Children's Services received five Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) referrals. All five referrals were considered by the LG&SCO and closed as requiring no further action.

Learning from complaints and representations:

8. Learning from complaints is critical to prevent recurrence of the cause(s) of the original complaint. It is important that we make sure that people's experiences help us to improve services where we can. Changes can include policy, procedure or employee development.

Brief Examples of Service Improvements identified during 2023/24

Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams

Action: A complaint was received where it was alleged that all those with PR had not been enabled to have their voices heard during the assessment process. An additional concern within the complaint identified that there had been communication issues between the service and the complainant.

Improvements:

Instructions were shared with all Practice Leads with a request that the following was disseminated amongst their team members:

- That all workers within Children's Social Care must share a copy of the safety plan, or other assessments undertaken with all those who have PR. This will ensure that parents and others with PR are informed about any work or decisions that are ongoing.
- Also, in cases where the worker is required to liaise with those with PR, it is important that they do attempt to contact them by the most convenient means, generally this will be by telephone, but if they are unable to make contact, alternative means such as email or text must be considered.

Children in our Care

Action: The complaint was in respect of financial support for an SGO holder along with the quality of communication by the Kinship Team when requesting updates in respect of this matter. The complainant disputed the outcome of the financial assessment as it was felt that this would cause financial hardship to the family. The complainant was also unhappy as the letter explaining the outcome of the financial assessment did not outline how to appeal the financial decision.

Improvements:

- As an outcome to this complaint, it was recommended that the financial support was reinstated and backdated to the point that it was stopped. Information has now been given to enable the complainant to formally appeal the decision.
- The letter, which is sent to families following financial assessments / decisions for SGO holders, has now been updated to include information about how to appeal.
- That information about the support to SGO connected carers has been shared with the family to inform them about what services are available to support them in their role.
- A worker has been allocated to the family as their point of contact and will carry out regular visits to go over what the family are entitled to as SGO connected carer and to discuss what support and guidance is required to meet the family's needs.

Child Protection Unit

Action: Following a complaint from a new parent in relation to Child Protection action being taken due to the circumstances of the child's birth, an issue was raised regarding the refusal to allow the parent to take a hair strand test. It was stated by the worker that the tests could only be provided when a letter of proceedings had been issued or during other legal action. This information was subsequently found to be incorrect.

Improvement: Following the investigation, it was agreed that, in future, Children's Services should consider the use of hair strand testing on a case-by-case basis following requests. This instruction was shared across all Practice Leads within an email from the Principal Social Worker. Practice Leads were asked to disseminate this information across all social work teams / staff. This was completed on 15 September 2023.

Future Objectives

9. Objectives for 2024/25 are to:
 - a. Continue to meet regularly with Senior Managers from Children's Services to consider what further action needs to be taken to;
 - i. Resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.
 - ii. Improve the number of complaints being investigated and resolved within statutory timescales.
 - iii. That all complaint outcomes letters are quality assured and signed off by Practice Leads to ensure good quality and, where appropriate, restorative responses.
 - iv. Ensure that the number of complaints progressing to Stage 2 and 3 remain low.
 - v. That any identified improvements to services are implemented where appropriate and monitored to ensure compliance by teams across Children's Services.
 - b. Ensure that staff members who receive compliments continue to pass the details on to Social Care Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team so that they or their team receive the recognition they deserve.

Recommendation

10. Committee is requested to:
 - I. Consider and comment on the annual report.
 - II. Indicate whether it is satisfied with the performance of Children's Services in responding to complaints and other representations and ensuring that this results in continuous service improvement.

TITLE OF REPORT: Work Programme for 2024-25

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services & Governance

Summary

This report details the draft work programme for the Families OSC for the 2024-25 municipal year and sets out the role and remit of the Committee.

1. Families OSC received a report in April 2024 setting out the work programme setting process for 2024/25, including suggestions that had been received to date from Elected Members and relevant officers.
2. A key component to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is work programme planning that seeks input from a wide variety of sources and identifies priority areas where scrutiny can seek to add the most value.

Terms of reference and remit

3. Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees may make recommendations to the authority in relation to matters that affect the authority's area and residents. Recommendations from scrutiny can enable improvements to the made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committee can also play a valuable role in developing policy. Whilst scrutiny committees are not decision making bodies, they have an important role in being able to influence decision makers.
4. Article 6 of the Council's Constitution sets out the aims and objectives of the scrutiny function in Gateshead Council. In particular it should be an integral part of the Council's framework and a constructive process which works alongside other parts of the Council's structure, contributing towards policy development. Importantly it will enhance rather than duplicate activity and it will look to broader issues affecting local people rather than just internal Council issues.
5. All of the overview and scrutiny committees have a role in:
 - Reviewing decisions, holding decision makers to account
 - The Call – in of executive decisions in accordance with the procedure set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee rules
 - Contributing to the policy making process through:-

- o Policy reviews agreed as part of the service planning cycle

- o Advice given to the Cabinet as part of the Council's performance management system
 - o Scrutinising and developing the Council's Improvement Programme
 - o Examining Issues in the Schedule of Decisions
- Ensuring other agencies, public and private, play their part in achieving a better quality of life for Gateshead residents.
6. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Families OSC performs the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following functions:
1. as an education authority
 2. in respect of the provision of social services, and other services to children and young people, including specific health services for children and young people (including the function of reviewing and scrutinising matters relating to the health service as set out on the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and associated regulations).
 3. to receive and consider monitoring reports on children in the Council's care.
 4. to keep under review the Council's arrangements for ensuring that the Council fulfils its role as corporate parent.
7. All of the Council's scrutiny activity should be underpinned by the four fundamental principles of good scrutiny set out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny:
- provide constructive "critical friend" challenge;
 - amplify the voice and concerns of the public
 - be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
 - drive improvement in public services.
8. The following Members have been appointed to the Families OSC for the 2024/25 municipal year:
- Councillor J Green (Chair)
 Councillor P Burns (Vice Chair)
 Councillor L Caffrey
 Councillor B Clelland
 Councillor P Craig
 Councillor R Hart
 Councillor K Henderson
 Councillor H Kelly
 Councillor K McCartney
 Councillor E McMaster
 Councillor J Mohammed
 Councillor L Moir
 Councillor A Ord
 Councillor M Ord
 Councillor I Patterson
 Councillor D Robson
 Councillor D Weatherley

9. A draft work programme based on the suggestions received in relation to the remit of Families OSC is attached at Appendix 1. Members of the Committee are invited comment on the content of the work programme and put forward any additional suggestions they may have.

Scrutiny Guidance

10. The government has recently updated statutory guidance in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Function. This can be accessed [here](#)

The guidance sets out the legislative context to overview and scrutiny, roles of committees, the powers scrutiny has to access information and methods for the scrutiny function in undertaking work.

Refresher training in relation to the role of overview and scrutiny will be delivered in June and July and will be open to all Elected Members to attend.

Recommendations

1. The Committee is asked to:-
 - a) Approve the draft work programme as set out at Appendix 1; and
 - b) Highlight any additional priority areas that Members feel it is important for the Committee to consider.

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Appendix 1

Work programme for Families OSC

Date	Items of Business
20 June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Management & Improvement Framework – Year End Performance 2023/24 - LADO Annual Report - Corporate Parenting Board Annual Update - Independent Reviewing Officer’s Annual Report - Work Programme 2024/25
5 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children’s Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report - Social Services Annual Report on Complaints and Representations – Children - Gateshead’s Children and Young people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing local transformation plan - Delivery of Therapy Services for children - impact and outcomes (<i>Postponed – Date TBC</i>) - Progress Update on delivery of SEND Strategy (<i>to include progress against all 4 priorities; SEND tribunal data; pathways into EET for those with SEND</i>) - Work Programme 2024/25
17 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update on support to vulnerable adolescents (<i>to include those missing and exploited / on the edge of Care – impact of strategies to reduce demand for children entering care</i>) - Substance mis-use in young people - Trauma Informed Team Outcomes and Update - Preventing Homelessness for Young People - Regional Adoption Agency Annual Report - Work Programme 2024/25
28 November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance Management & Improvement Framework 2024/25 – Six month update

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation and Engagement of Children and Young People - Progress on delivering Early Help and Prevention Strategy <i>(to include Family Hub development; delivery of Healthy Child Programme and Baby Box scheme)</i> - Progress update on delivery of youth justice services and inspection outcomes - Work Programme 2024/25
16 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools Performance Overview Report <i>(including attendance, attainment and exclusion data; ofsted school outcomes)</i> - Early Years Outcomes and Sufficiency - Work Programme 2024/25
6 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Progress Update on Children's Social Care Improvement Plan - Preventing Youth Crime and Serious Violence <i>(invite HEHC OSC to jointly look at this)</i> - Work Programme 2024/25
10 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Response to Child Poverty in Gateshead - Health Service support in schools for children with chronic health conditions / childhood allergies <i>(to include trends, treatment, management in schools)</i> - Work programme development 2024/25