



South Tyneside Council

Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny Committee 10 June 2026

Children Safeguarding and Young People Scrutiny Committee 24 February 2026

Present: Councillors K. Maxwell (Chair), Porthouse, Wood, Hamilton, Francis, Dawes, Proudlock & Owens-Palmer.

Apologies: Councillors T. Roberts, Welsh, Cunningham & R. Taylor.

Chris Ring (Head of Children and Families Social Care), Carly Brownlee (Operations Manager for Fostering and Kinship Care), Gemma Briggs (Operational Manager Family Help Services), Jonathan Lunness (Scrutiny and Democracy Manager) & Sean Allen (Democracy Support Officer)

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes from the Children Safeguarding and Young People scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7th January 2026

The minutes were agreed by the Committee Members.

Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2026 be agreed as a true record.

3. Foster Care Update

The committee were given a presentation on the ongoing work within the Foster team.

The presentation provided an overview on the key data for the Fostering and Connected Person Team, including 290 children in case as of December 2025, of which 70 were within inhouse fostering agreements and 40 within the connected person foster care agreement. It also highlighted 25 children had left care under a special guardianship order since April 2025.

The presentation highlighted areas of achievement which included:

- Reviewed and implemented the updated financial offer for carers.
- Expanded training offer, including new twilight sessions for working carers and families.
- Launched Fostering Friendly Employer status with HR.
- Strengthened relationships with Foster with North East (FwNE) and IFAs
- Began scoping a Supported Lodgings offer within the team.

The presentation gave the committee information on the recent Foster Carer survey results:

- Carers rate their supervision from the Fostering Team as beneficial.
- Carers feel supported in their role.
- 100% of carers report feeling emotionally supported by the Fostering Team.
- Carers enjoy the new training offer and feel there is a wide range of topics to support their role.
- Carers felt kept up to date with developments within the fostering team.

Members were also given an update on the Mockingbird support that was available to foster carers. Details were also provided on the different events held for the foster carers.

A Member queried the content of the presentation, stating they expected more in depth information rather than the presentation that was provided to members ahead of the meeting being read out. It was advised that it was an update to committee and that the members were able to ask any questions they wished.

A member queried how support was offered, it was noted that monthly visits occur, but that it can be adapted on a case by case basis.

A member queried the financial support that was available to adopters, it was noted that it was means tested. It was also noted that there was other support such as paid leave for kinship carers which was under government review.

They also queried the difference between staying put and supported lodgings. It was noted that supported lodgings was directed more to 16-18 years old where they have been late into the fostering process, its seen as part lodger, part fostered for support which allows them to continue as much of a normal life as possible. Stay put was designed to allow children in foster care to remain in the home until they are 21 years old to allow them to transition to adulthood, this is designed to be similar to if the child lived in their biological home.

Members queried the budget for the services and how it was impacted by having children outside the borough. It was noted that the aim was to reduce the outgoings outside the borough, but due to there not being enough homes for children or enough foster carers, it was difficult but something that continued to be assessed and worked on to ensure that not only was the budget being used in the best way, but that the children were in the best possible situation which was the overall priority.

4. Family Hubs

The Committee was given a presentation from the Operational Manager, Family Help Services, and the Family Hub Team Manager, which gave an overview of Family Hubs, services offered and their impact locally.

It was explained that Family Hubs were established as a “one stop shop” for families, building on the Sure Start model. The Hubs would offer parenting support, support around child development and play and health services, using a strength-based approach offering services in a non-judgemental setting.

There were 12 Hubs across the borough, staffed by qualified practitioners who would deliver services both from the Hubs and on an outreach basis in homes, nurseries and schools. Family Hubs were intended to be welcoming spaces, adapting to the needs of the local community and signposting to other services as necessary.

It was noted that the Government had recently announced funding to help develop Best Start Family Hubs, although more detailed

information about amount of funding and policy requirements was not yet available.

Services offered included debt and welfare advice, weight management, mental health services, housing support and smoking cessation, highlighting the broad range of provision available to families in addition to parenting support.

On engagement, it was noted that 62% of children were engaging with a Family Hub Service, with 2,000 visitors per month. Some highlights included 204 sign-ups to Dad Pad, 132 referrals for Baby Boxes, 422 registered learners, and 5,964 parenting support sessions reaching 1,879 children.

A Member queried if family hubs were free for all to use or only for social housing tenants. It was advised the hubs were available to any resident. While some areas of support were targeted, such as the baby boxes, the advice and other areas of support were free to be accessed.

A member queried the funding and how it was received. It was advised that the funding was from a grant from the Department of Education as well as the council.

A member queried what the dad pad was, it was advised it was an app directed at new dads who were looking for information and support.

5. Work programme

Submitted: Report of the Director Governance & Corporate Affairs

Members were informed of the plans for the upcoming work programme.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

6. Chairs urgent items

No urgent items.

SIGNED _____

DATE _____
