

**SCRUTINY REPORT**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE  
AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**31 JULY 2018**

**Early Help and Prevention**

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**Summary**

This report will provide an overview of the current Early Help and Prevention Services in Middlesbrough including the current service structure and what each team is responsible for, how services are delivered and who they are provided for.

**Introduction**

The rate of demand for Children's Care in Middlesbrough is greater than national, regional and statistical neighbours. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later therefore a critical element of demand management for Children's Social Care and in order to the achieve best outcomes for children and families is the effective delivery of early help.

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.

The early help agenda is coordinated though Children's Trust Board and Local Safeguarding Children's Board. The Children's Trust works to the objective of achieving a Fairer, Safer, and Stronger Middlesbrough for children and the board is governed by the following vision:

***"We will work together with you, so that you can make the most out of your family life, to be healthier, to achieve, be safe, strengthen and enjoy your lives together".***

In addition national guidance ([Working Together - July 2018](#)) outlines that the Local Authority and its partners are responsible for the delivery of early help. The document states the following:

“Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. The early help on offer should draw upon any local assessment of need, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help programmes. In addition to high quality support in universal services, specific local early help services will typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with health issues, including mental health, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts, and help for emerging problems relating to domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse by an adult or a child. Services may also focus on improving family functioning”

## **Early Help in Middlesbrough Council (including evidence of impact)**

The Early Help and Prevention Service in Middlesbrough Council is called **Stronger Families**. The service has four work streams

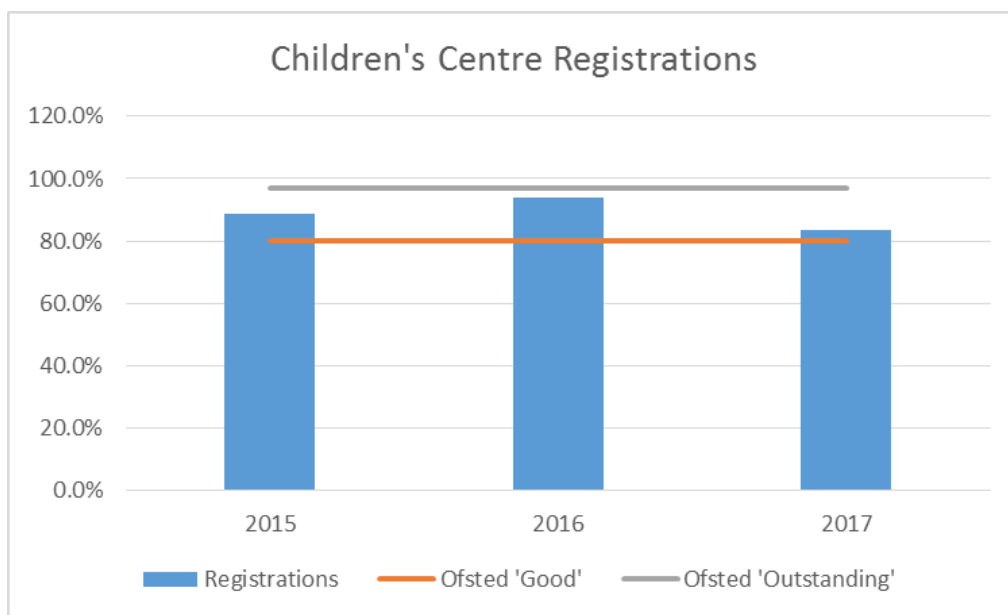
- 1) School Readiness
- 2) Family Casework
- 3) Family Partnership
- 4) Work Readiness

### **School Readiness Team**

Middlesbrough’s School Readiness team provide universal and targeted early help with families who have children aged 0-5 years in a number of ways which are briefly outlined below:

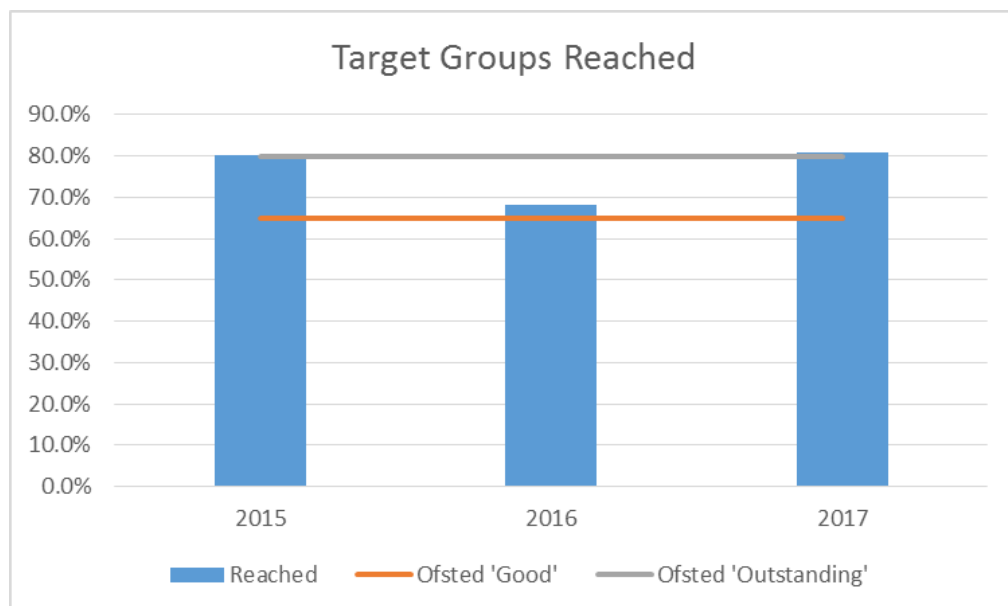
- There are eight Children’s Centres in Middlesbrough which help children become ready for nursery and primary school. The Children’s Centres provide a range of activities which any parent can attend, along with targeted school readiness interventions, which are delivered jointly with the health visiting service. The services include: pre-birth activities such as Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond programmes and midwifery services. Following the birth of a child they offer: speech and language support, access to the local health visiting services, physiotherapy drop-ins, housing advice, welfare advice, access to parenting programmes and family support services.
- The centres also work closely with local libraries to encourage parents to join the library and share books with their children to improve speech, language and early literacy. Middlesbrough’s Early Years Support Service are an integral part of the Children’s Centre offer. This is a joined up offer of support to families with children under 5, shaped according to their need, and delivered from a local access point.
- The early year’s team provide access to good quality childcare, including free early education for two and three year olds, information can be found via the Family Information Service and Family Service Directory: [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/fsd).
- The team also support childcare settings in terms of the quality and standard of their settings. We have staff who work closely with settings on their safeguarding, policies and procedures and we have a qualified teacher who works with settings to increase their Ofsted rating and we will only place funded children in good or outstanding settings (as graded by Ofsted).

## Children's Centre Registrations



|               | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Registrations | 88.7% | 93.8% | 83.5% |

## Children's Centre Target Groups – Reached



|         | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| Reached | 80.3% | 68.2% | 80.7% |

## Family Casework

In Middlesbrough, families who require additional help due to problems such as domestic violence, mental health and substance misuse can refer themselves into Childrens Services via First Contact or other agencies/professionals can refer them in. There are Stronger Families staff working within First Contact who will signpost families into the correct early help service which can include Stronger Families or a range of other partner's agencies. This is to ensure that **children receive the right support at the right time**.

Families who are allocated to the Family Team meet the safeguarding threshold for level 3 services, have complex needs and are allocated a lead practitioner. The lead practitioner will work with the family, and other agencies as appropriate, to assess the family needs using an Early Help Assessment (My Family Plan) and agree support that will be co-ordinated by the lead practitioner.

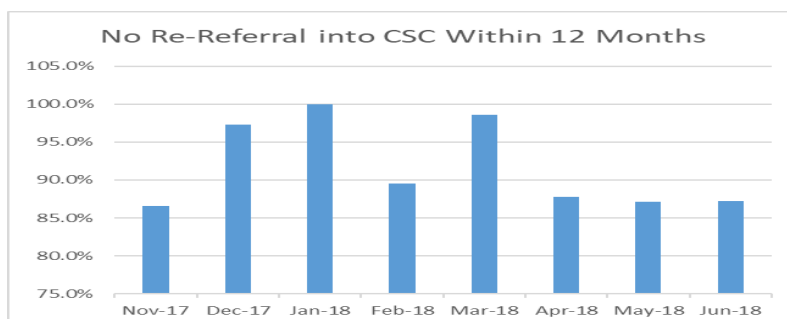
The Family Team use a restorative approach, working with a 'whole family' approach and using a variety of evidence based interventions and tools which focus on the voice of the child, to engage the family and resolve the issues identified.

The lead practitioner will hold a family review meeting every 4-6 weeks. The family, lead practitioner and all involved agencies will attend this meeting to update on progress, and agree actions to continue to address and resolve issues.

The family will close to the Family Team once the work is complete and needs have been met, this is usually within a three to six month period. Therefore, prior to the final family review meeting, the lead practitioner will offer to complete a Crisis Card with the family which they keep – this helps them to identify when issues might be arising and is a tool to help them to manage that situation before it escalates into a crisis.

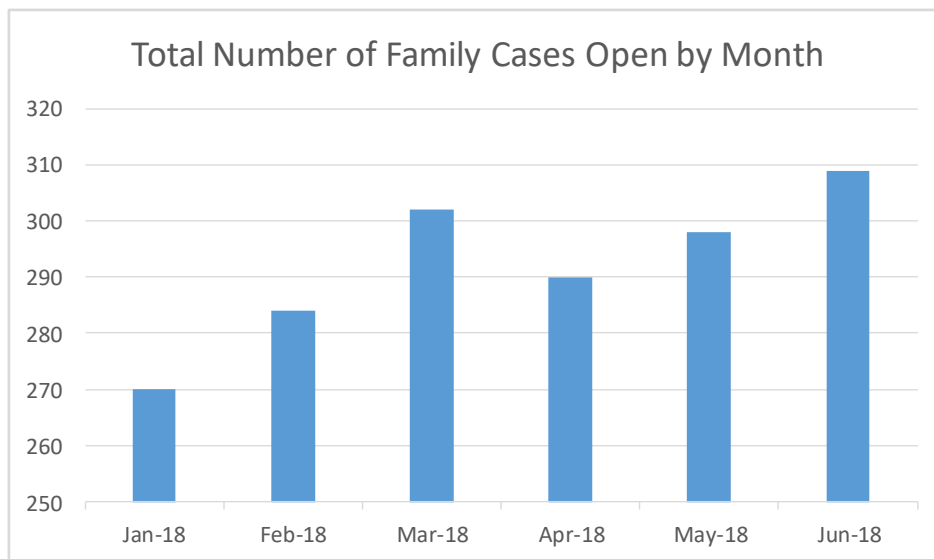
A number of families are moved into 'maintenance' where a maintenance plan will be completed with the family – this will include steps they can take and contact details of who can support them if they need help with specific issues, and the family are contacted at regular periods without it necessarily resulting in the case being referred back into the Family Team.

## Re-Referrals into Children's Social Care

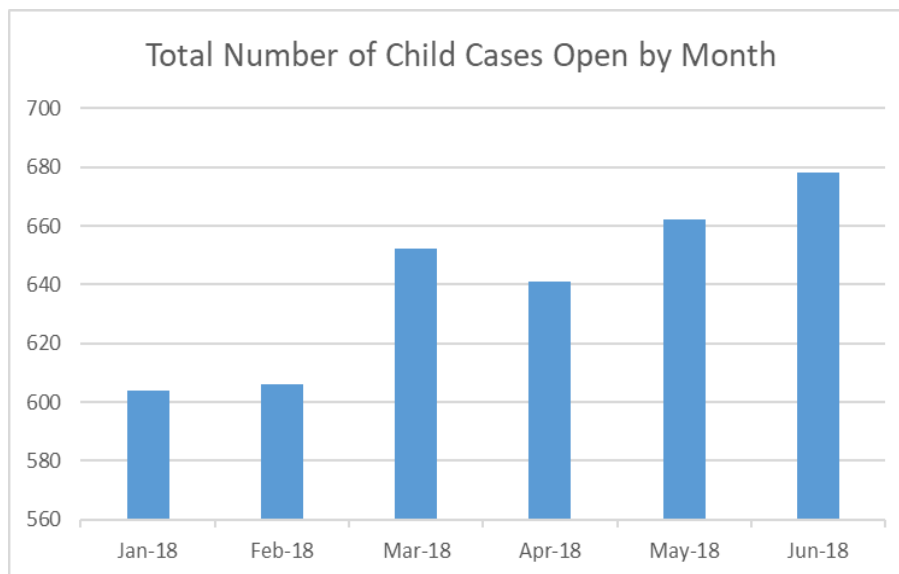


|  | Nov-17 | Dec-17 | Jan-18 | Feb-18 | Mar-18 | Apr-18 | May-18 | Jun-18 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| No Re-Referral's into CSC Within 12 Months | 86.6%  | 97.3%  | 100.0% | 89.5%  | 98.6%  | 87.8%  | 87.1%  | 87.2%  |

## Total Number of Cases Open to Family Casework



|                 | Jan-18 | Feb-18 | Mar-18 | Apr-18 | May-18 | Jun-18 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Family Casework | 270    | 284    | 302    | 290    | 298    | 309    |



|                 | Jan-18 | Feb-18 | Mar-18 | Apr-18 | May-18 | Jun-18 |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Family Casework | 604    | 606    | 652    | 641    | 662    | 678    |

## Family Partnership Team

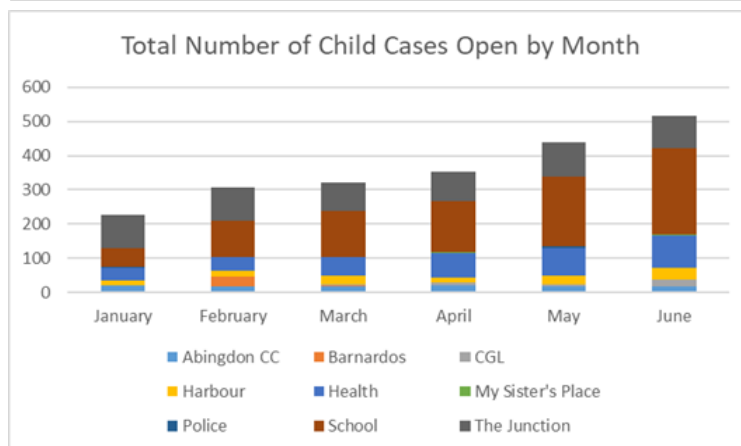
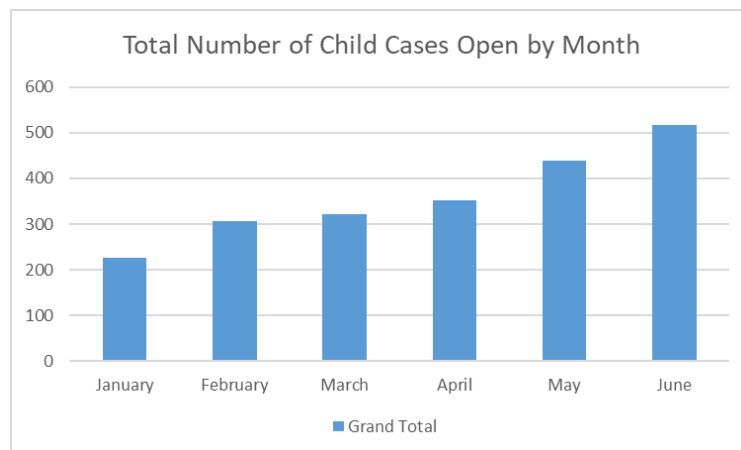
All services that have direct contact with adults, children and young people and who are likely to identify that there are problems or issues that are negatively affecting the adult, family or household need to be aware of the My Family Plan and, where appropriate, to be able to undertake one.

This means if a parent or child or young person needs help, then those services can help them. This could be GP, teacher, special education needs worker, health visitor, school nurse, a family practitioner, children centres or a worker from any community services. Sometimes those services work together as a team to help families. It depends on how complex the needs of the family are.

Families and/or services can ask for help by contacting the Family Partnership Team. The Family Partnership Team is a family support service. They make sure that families are getting the right support and that the right services are involved. They provide information, advice and guidance to families and services and help them to work together.

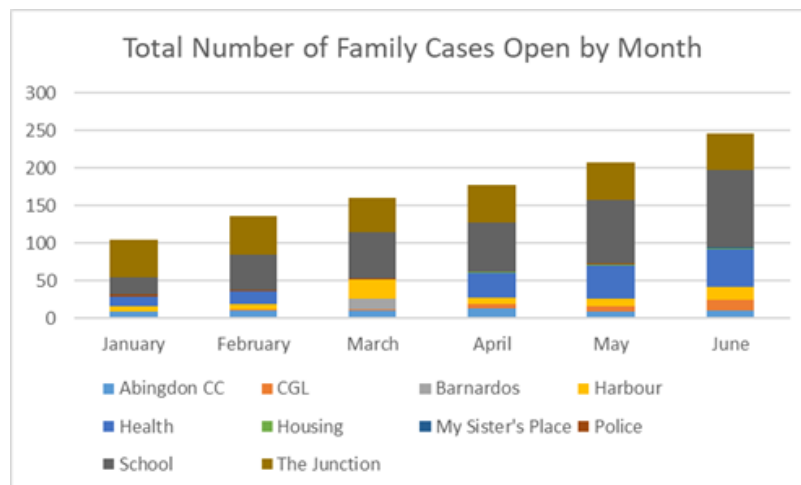
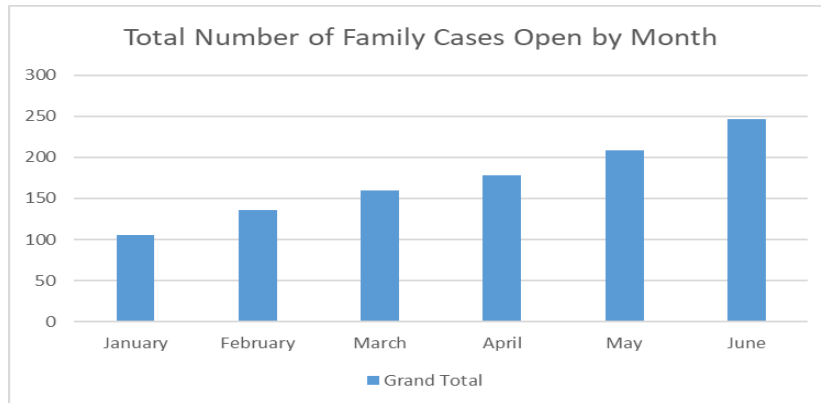
The team have strong working relationships with other local community services, the voluntary sector, church sector and adult services. This is to make sure that families are quickly and effectively helped by the right service.

### **Total Number of Child Cases Open in 2018**



|                    | January    | February   | March      | April      | May        | June       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Abingdon CC        | 20         | 19         | 19         | 22         | 18         | 18         |
| Barnardos          | 0          | 27         | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| CGL                | 0          | 1          | 3          | 6          | 6          | 21         |
| Harbour            | 16         | 18         | 26         | 16         | 25         | 33         |
| Health             | 36         | 40         | 56         | 71         | 80         | 95         |
| My Sister's Place  | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          | 2          | 2          |
| Police             | 4          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 3          | 1          |
| School             | 53         | 104        | 133        | 149        | 206        | 253        |
| The Junction       | 98         | 97         | 83         | 86         | 98         | 93         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>227</b> | <b>306</b> | <b>321</b> | <b>352</b> | <b>438</b> | <b>516</b> |

### Total Number of Family Cases Open in 2018



|                    | January    | February   | March      | April      | May        | June       |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Abingdon CC        | 8          | 10         | 10         | 13         | 9          | 10         |
| CGL                | 0          | 1          | 2          | 6          | 6          | 14         |
| Barnardos          | 0          | 0          | 13         | 0          | 0          | 0          |
| Harbour            | 8          | 8          | 26         | 8          | 11         | 17         |
| Health             | 13         | 17         | 1          | 33         | 44         | 51         |
| Housing            | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| My Sister's Place  | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 1          |
| Police             | 3          | 1          | 1          | 0          | 2          | 1          |
| School             | 22         | 48         | 61         | 67         | 84         | 102        |
| The Junction       | 51         | 51         | 46         | 50         | 51         | 49         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>105</b> | <b>136</b> | <b>160</b> | <b>178</b> | <b>208</b> | <b>246</b> |

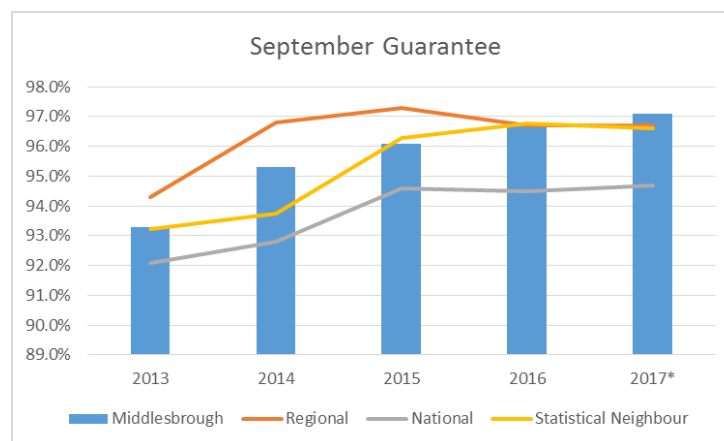
Work readiness

The Work Readiness Team are responsible for tracking and following up all young people aged 16-18 years, and up to 25 years if they have special educational needs or are a care leaver, to record their current post 16 destination. The team offers impartial careers information, advice and guidance and personalised support to help move young people into education, employment and training opportunities.

The team aim is to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Middlesbrough through an offer of

- Impartial careers information, advice and guidance for Year 12 and Year 13 young people and for Year 11s excluded from school
- To ensure Year 11s and Year 12s have a an offer of learning for September - September Guarantee
- To track and follow up all 16 and 17 year olds and those in a targeted group
- Support to teen parents, young mums and young people with special educational needs or disabilities to get into education, employment or training
- A dedicated worker to support care leavers to get into education, employment or training and sustain their placement
- Dedicated support to the Youth Employment Initiative
- A My Family Plan where appropriate to support needs of the young person and their family
- Early identification of those young people who are at risk of dropping out of education, employment or training
- To work with partners including MAP to reduce the number of young people in Middlesbrough who are not in education, employment and training (NEET)

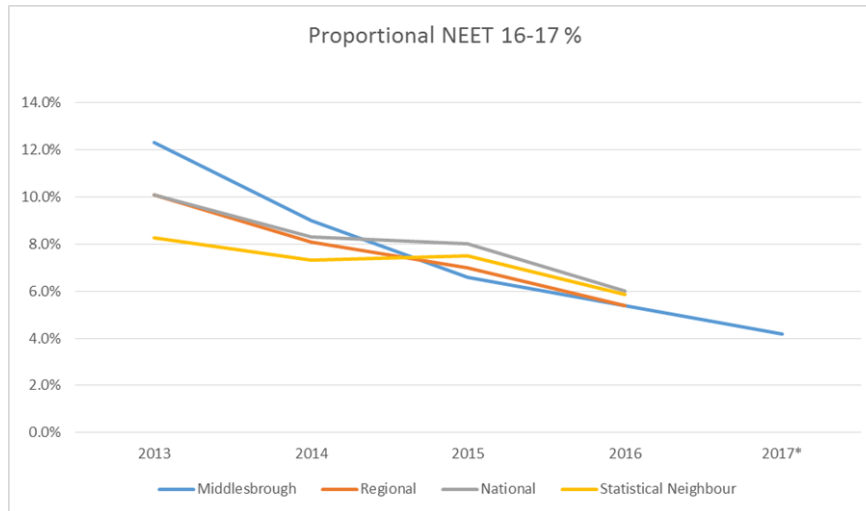
## **September Guarantee**





|                       | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017* |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Middlesbrough         | 93.3% | 95.3% | 96.1% | 96.8% | 97.1% |
| Regional              | 94.3% | 96.8% | 97.3% | 96.7% | 96.7% |
| National              | 92.1% | 92.8% | 94.6% | 94.5% | 94.7% |
| Statistical Neighbour | 93.2% | 93.7% | 96.3% | 96.8% | 96.6% |

### **Stretch Target – Proportional NEET**



|                       | 2013  | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017* |
|-----------------------|-------|------|------|------|-------|
| Middlesbrough         | 12.3% | 9.0% | 6.6% | 5.4% | 4.2%  |
| Regional              | 10.1% | 8.1% | 7.0% | 5.4% |       |
| National              | 10.1% | 8.3% | 8.0% | 6.0% |       |
| Statistical Neighbour | 8.3%  | 7.3% | 7.5% | 5.9% |       |

### **Conclusion**

The Early Help Strategy and delivery plans have strategic oversight from the partnership through the Prevention and Partnership sub group which reports to Childrens Trust and the MSCB.

Middlesbroughs early help approach is built on national best practice and has benefitted from learning through the Partners in Practice model, whereby we are working in partnership with other local authorities with identified good practice and this allows us to model our early help offer on good practice and evidence based approaches.