

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER BY MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr

Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

10th December 2009

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present to Members statistical information relating to the educational outcomes of looked after children, as measured against the key performance indicators linked to educational attainment. A progress report of actions taken to enhance the 'Enjoy and Achieve' dimension of the Every Child Matters agenda for Looked After Children (LAC) is also incorporated in this report.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the educational achievements of children looked after.

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION, WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£75,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

If urgent, please give full reasons.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The local authority has a duty under Section 22(3) of The Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people who are in the care of the local authority. One critical dimension of the welfare of 'looked after' children is their education, education being the key to determining success in later life.
6. Under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004, the Government has made a good education for every child in care a priority. This statutory guidance places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of every looked after child for whom they are responsible. It is designed to ensure that local authorities take particular account of the educational implications of any decisions they take about the welfare of looked after children.
7. In spite of clear improvements in GCSE outcomes at grades A*-C for looked after children since 2000 (from 7% to 14%), the educational attainment of children in care remains low and the pace of change means that the gap between those in care and all other children has in fact widened, with children in care under performing significantly compared to their peers at all key stages of the education system. Unsurprisingly given this background, care leavers are more than twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) at age nineteen.
8. The reasons for this are complex and include factors such as instability of care and school placements; too much time spent out of school and insufficient help with their education when they fall behind; their unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs; and the fact that their primary carers are often not equipped or expected to support and encourage their learning and development.
9. Children in care are less likely to fall behind at school if every professional associated with their care and education attaches the same primacy to their education as any 'good parent' would do and do all that a good parent would, to enhance their life chances.

ANALYSIS OF KEY STAGE SATS AND GCSE (or GNVQ equivalent) RESULTS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2008-2009 FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Key Stage 1 SATs Results - Teacher Assessment National attainment level is Level 2+

10. 7 Middlesbrough Looked After Children were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF returns at Key Stage 1, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. All 7 children are educated in Middlesbrough schools and all achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their Personal Education Plans (PEPs). One of these 7 children has a SEN statement.

Key Stage 1		
	M'bro	Overall %
Number	7	7
L2+ English Reading	3	42.9%
L2+ English Writing	4	57.1%
L2+ Maths	4	57.1%

Overall analysis of CLA who achieved the national attainment level at KS1

SUBJECT	CLA (7)	M'Bro	National
L2+ English Reading	42.9% (3)	81.7%	84%
L2+ English Writing	57.1% (4)	79.7%	81%
L2+ Maths	57.1% (4)	85.9%	89%

Key Stage 2 SATs Results

National attainment level is Level 4+

11. 10 Middlesbrough Looked After Children were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF returns at Key Stage 2, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. 6 of these 10 children are educated in Middlesbrough schools. All 10 children achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their personal education plans (PEPs). 4 of these 10 children have SEN statements.

Key Stage 2					
	In M'Bro	OOA*		In M'Bro	OOA*
Number	6	4		6	4
Tests					
L4+ English	3	3		50%	75%
L4+ Maths	2	3		33.3%	75%
L4+ Science	3	3		50%	75%

*OOA: Children educated out of area

Overall analysis of CLA who achieved the national attainment level at KS2

SUBJECT	CLA (10)	M'Bro	National
L4+ English	60% (6)	75.3%	80%
L4+ Maths	50% (5)	75.5%	79%
L4+ Science	60% (6)	85.1%	88%

GCSE Results for Children Looked After In Year 11

12. 10 Middlesbrough Looked After Children were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF return at Key Stage 4, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. One of these 10 young people is

exempt from DCSF OC2 reporting due to being educated in Scotland. The overall results are therefore based on a cohort of 9 young people.

13. 7 of these 9 young people are educated in Middlesbrough schools. All 9 children achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their personal education plans (PEPs). 3 of these 9 young people have SEN statements.

Key Stage 4					
	In M'Bro	OOA		In M'Bro	OOA
Number	7	2		7	2
Test Results					
Sat at least one exam	7	2		100%	100%
Achieved 5+ A*- C	0	1		0%	50%
5+ A*-C including English & Maths	0	0		0%	0%
Achieved 5+ A*- G	2	2		28.6%	100%
Achieved 1+ A*- G	7	2		100%	100%

Overall analysis of CLA who achieved GCSEs in Year 11

Test Results	CLA (9)	M'Bro
Sat at least one GCSE or equivalent exam	100% (9)	
Achieved 5+ A*-C	11.1% (1)	64.4%
Achieved 5+ A*-C including English and Maths	0%	36.6%
Achieved 5+ A*-G	44.4% (4)	88.7%
Achieved 1+ A*-G	100% (9)	

14. Statistical data for looked after children is not published nationally when local authority year groups consist of 10 or less pupils, 10 being the denominator. Given DCSF guidance, the statistical data included in this report will be withheld from national publication.

CURRENT POSITION

15. 24.2% of Middlesbrough Looked After Children were noted to have a Statement of Special Educational Needs in 2008/09, with a further 19.3% being at the School Action Plus stage of the SEN Code of Practice, making 44% total. This evidence speaks for itself when stating that children in care are significantly more likely than others to require additional support in class.
16. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are a statutory requirement for all children of compulsory school age who are expected to be in care for more than 28 days. PEPs allow social workers and teachers to find out what children want from their education and for children to raise issues that are affecting their education, such as bullying. In August 2008, a policy on dealing with incidents of bullying against children in local authority care was consulted on and agreed.

17. In 2008, local authorities were asked to participate in regional audits of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), this process being supported by members of the DCSF Education Protects Network. The audit took place via a workshop where professionals came together to review formal records of recently completed PEPs for a range of Looked After Children and Young People aged from Foundation Stage through to Key Stage 4.

18. The findings of the audit are noted as follows:

Summary of Strengths:

- There are different PEPs in place to reflect age of child.
- There is excellent evidence of children being present at the PEP meeting.
- All Y11's have progression plans in place; these are completed by a connexions worker.
- Facility to have more frequent PEP meetings, not restricted to Care Review cycle.

Weaknesses:

- Some PEPs did not identify long term targets.

Additional Comments:

- There were no post 16 PEPs available.
- The PEPs are not yet available as part of the electronic care records.
- The PEPs sampled were of a high quality, is this a realistic reflection of all PEPs?

19. For a variety of reasons children in care can often miss a significant amount of education. Middlesbrough Council commissions the services of a company called Welfare Call to monitor the school attendance of all its looked after children. Schools are contacted on a daily basis (unless alternative arrangements have been made) and if an absence is reported, the parent or carer is contacted to check the validity of the absence. The child's social worker is alerted to all reported absences and the looked after children's education manager receives daily attendance data on all children and young people in the care of the local authority, ensuring a prompt response to early identification of potential disengagement.

20. Such stringent attendance monitoring not only assists with individual pupil tracking but also with the collation of data for the monitoring of national performance indicators. For 2008/09, 8.7% of looked after children who were continuously looked after for a period of 12 months plus, were reported as missing 25 days plus education, showing a marked improvement on the 12.8% noted in the previous year 2007/08.

21. £40K, provided by the School Management Forum (SMF) to support looked after children's learning, has assisted in helping to reduce the amount of time young people spend out of school; prevent permanent and fixed term exclusions and support flexible learning packages to help motivate pupils and enable each one to succeed in their own right. 7 of the 10 young people in Year 11 in 2008-2009 were provided with additional support via SMF funding to

assist with personalised learning pathways to help achieve individual success and pave the way for successful transitions to adulthood.

22. In 2008, the Government introduced Personal Education Allowances (PEAs) of an amount up to £500 for all 'eligible' looked after children of compulsory school age, to provide additional support to those who have been identified as being at risk of falling behind their peers in their education. These allowances have been used to pay for a variety of activities and resources which support the learning and development of a looked after child, for example, one to one tuition, out of school learning, additional educational trips and visits or vocational training. As suggested in government guidance, all requests for additional learning support are identified via the multi-agency forum of the PEP (Personal Education Plan) meeting, the child's participation in this decision making/ planning forum being essential.
23. To assist with individual pupil tracking and championing the education of looked after children, Middlesbrough has appointed a school adviser for vulnerable children, who took up post in September 2009. The school adviser for vulnerable children will take on some of the responsibilities of a 'virtual head' as discussed in the Care Matters agenda, the role of which is still evolving.
24. Designated teachers for looked after children are now a statutory requirement. Section 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 places a duty on the governing body of a maintained school to designate a member of the staff as having responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of looked after children who are registered at the school. The Act also makes regulations about the qualifications and or experience of the designated person specifying that they should be; a qualified teacher, the head teacher or acting head teacher or that the person has been co-ordinating provision for looked after children on the school's roll for 6 months prior to the regulations coming into force and the governing body is satisfied that the designated person is taking steps to become a qualified teacher by 2012.
25. This statutory duty came into force in September 2009. As a result of putting the role on a statutory footing and setting out in broad terms the roles and responsibilities of the position, there is an expectation that there will be an enhanced level of understanding and communication between professionals involved in supporting the educational achievement of looked after children.
26. As well as designated teachers, Middlesbrough has named designated governors to champion and promote the education of children in care. Feedback received from the governors training events held in 2008/09 is as follows:

What went well?

- Very informative
- Excellent presentation
- Well worth attending

Even better if.....

- We could get the DVD to work.

27. Looked after children educated in Middlesbrough continue to be provided with Connexions support via designated officers. This additional support equates to 2 days per week dedicated support to Year 9 – Year 11 students and 2 days per week support to post 16 young people. The Connexions personal advisers support Year 11 transition planning, ensuring September guarantees are in place. During 2008/09, the personal advisers were also involved with all Year 9 pupils, using ICT software programmes to assist and advise on individual option choices.
28. The Educational Psychology Service continues to provide additional support to looked after children via a referral process, when issues or concerns are raised, or as part of the permanency planning process. The support or advice offered is additional to the service 'bought back' by schools and is a highly valued resource that is regularly accessed. The Educational Psychology Service has assisted in facilitating training for foster carers.
29. Foster carers continue to receive annual training updates on issues relating to education and helping children learn. Training is also provided to all prospective foster carers, emphasising the importance that is placed on education and supporting individual success. To encourage this, the contracts of newly approved foster carers are under review, to discourage carers taking children on holiday during term time. The raising of aspirations of parents and carers is an integral feature in the success of all children.
30. In September 2009, the Designated Nurse/ Health Co-ordinator for Looked After Children joined the LAC Education team, to enhance multi-agency working. This integration is a positive step towards bridging the communication gap between agencies, in particular designated teachers and school nurses. A priority area of collaborative work is reviewing the notification procedures when a child becomes looked after to ensure a more streamlined response, especially when children are placed out of authority.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

31. All social care services are delivered within a framework of anti-discriminatory practice and there are no specific issues arising from the information presented within this report.

OPTION APPRAISAL

32. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

33. There are no financial, legal or ward implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

34. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the educational achievements of children looked after.

REASONS

35. The effectiveness of the Local Authority as a Corporate Parent, the priorities it sets, and the attitudes of those working within it, all affect the educational attainment of children in care. Local Authorities have a duty under the Children Act 2004, to monitor and promote the educational achievements of looked after children to enable each and every one of them to achieve to their full potential, wherever they are placed.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

36. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report.
- Social Exclusion Unit Report (SEU) '*A Better Education for Children in Care September 2003.*'
 - DfES Statutory Guidance '*Duty of Local Authorities to Promote the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children.*'
 - Children Act 2004
 - *Care Matters; Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care* Consultation document 9 October 2006
 - Children and Young Person's Act 2008

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