

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STATISTICAL UPDATE

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

Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

3rd August 2010

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide the Corporate Parenting Board with statistical information regarding Children Looked After by Middlesbrough Council.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the statistical update on 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

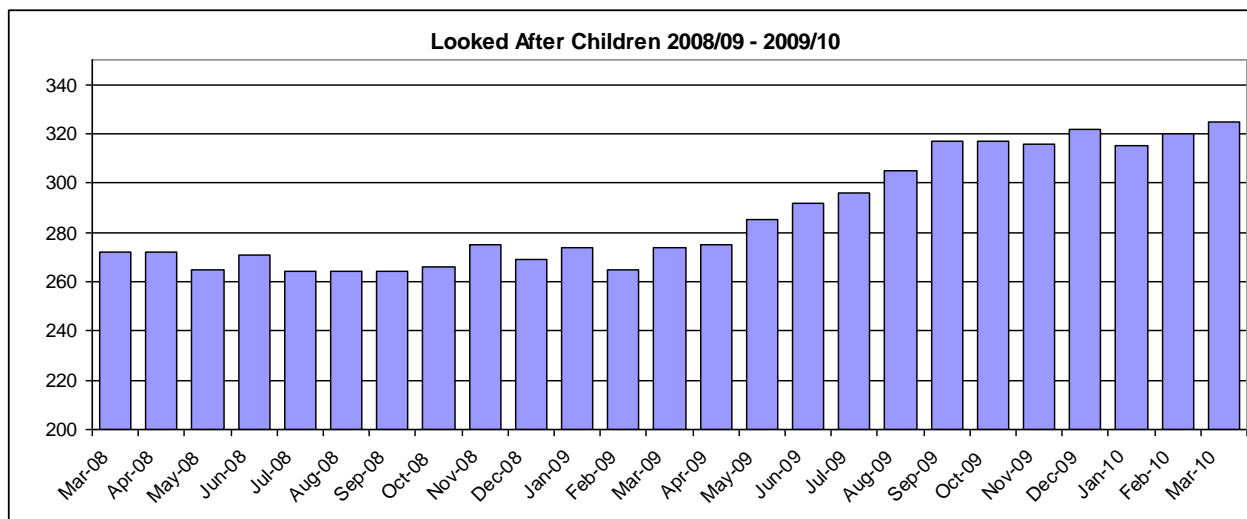
BACKGROUND & EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The provision of services to children looked after is a core statutory function and corporate responsibility. For over a decade, the government has maintained a clear focus on improving services for this group of young people. This is reflected in the range of local government targets and performance indicators relating to children looked after.

6. Government guidance for elected Members on corporate parenting identifies the need for Members to receive regular statistical updates on the numbers of children being looked after by the authority.

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

7. As at 31 March 2010, there were 325 children looked after by Middlesbrough Council. This represents a 19% increase on March 2009, when there were 274 children looked after and compares with a 1.5% increase between March 2008 and March 2009.



8. The number of children looked after per 10,000 0-17 year-olds has continued to rise, reaching 103 per 10,000 in 2009/10. This compares with 88 for Middlesbrough in 2008/09 when the average for England was 55 and the average for Middlesbrough's statistical neighbours was 79.
9. During 2009/10, 187 children became looked after compared with 152 during 2008/09, a 23% increase. The table below shows the wards in which those children were living at the time that they were taken into care.

Locality Area Ward	Children coming into care 2009/10
North	27.3%
Gresham	29
Middlehaven	9
University	7
Ayresome	6
East	34.2%
North Ormesby & Brambles	22
Pallister	19
Park End	11
Thorntree	10
Beckfield	2

Locality Area Ward	Children coming into care 2009/10	
South	4.3%	
Coulby Newham	4	
Hemlington	2	
Marion	1	
Stainton & Thornton	1	
West	27.8%	
Beechwood	14	
Ladgate	9	
Linthorpe	9	
Clairville	8	
Park	8	
Brookfield	2	
Kadar	2	
Not Recorded	12	6.4%
Total	187	100.0%

PLACEMENTS

10. The following tables set out the placements of children looked after as at March 2010, with comparator data for previous years.

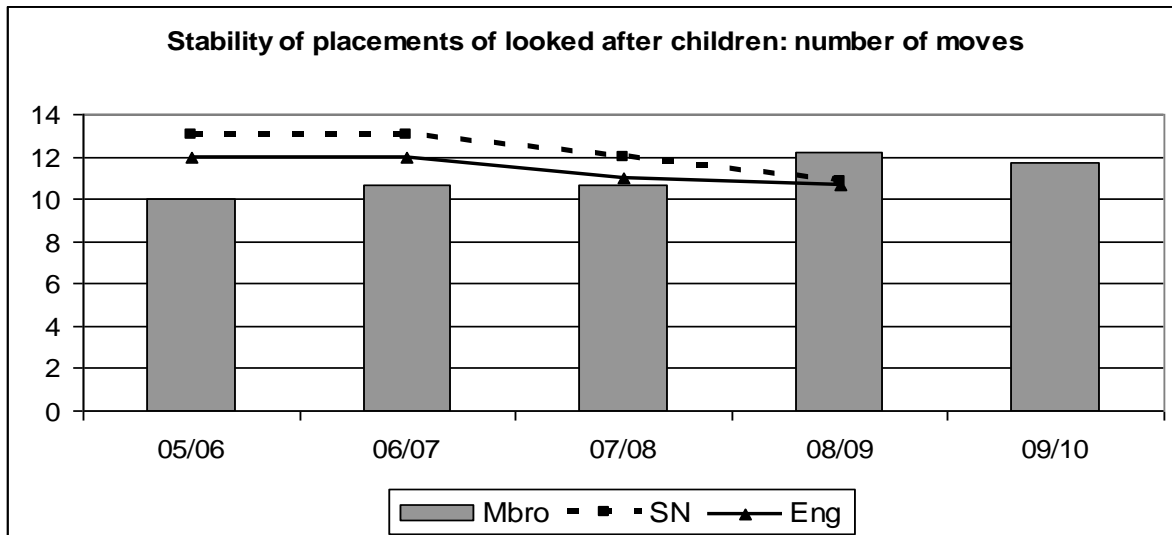
Placement	March 2008		March 2009		March 2010	
with foster carers	213	78%	214	77.5%	246	75.7%
placed for adoption	10	4%	4	1.5%	18	5.5%
in Middlesbrough Children's Homes	11	4%	11	4%	8	2.5%
placed home on trial or with extended family members	17	6%	22	8%	18	5.5%
in specialist residential placements outside of the area	17	6%	18	8%	18	5.5%
independent living / lodgings / other	4	1%	7	1%	17	5.2%

11. Two categories of placement show a significant increase in the number of young people placed – adoption and independent living/lodgings. The number of children in Middlesbrough children's homes has dropped to 8 against the maximum capacity for local provision of 11.
12. The proportion of children and young people placed with foster carers has remained fairly consistent over the past three years, reducing by 2% between 2008 and 2010.

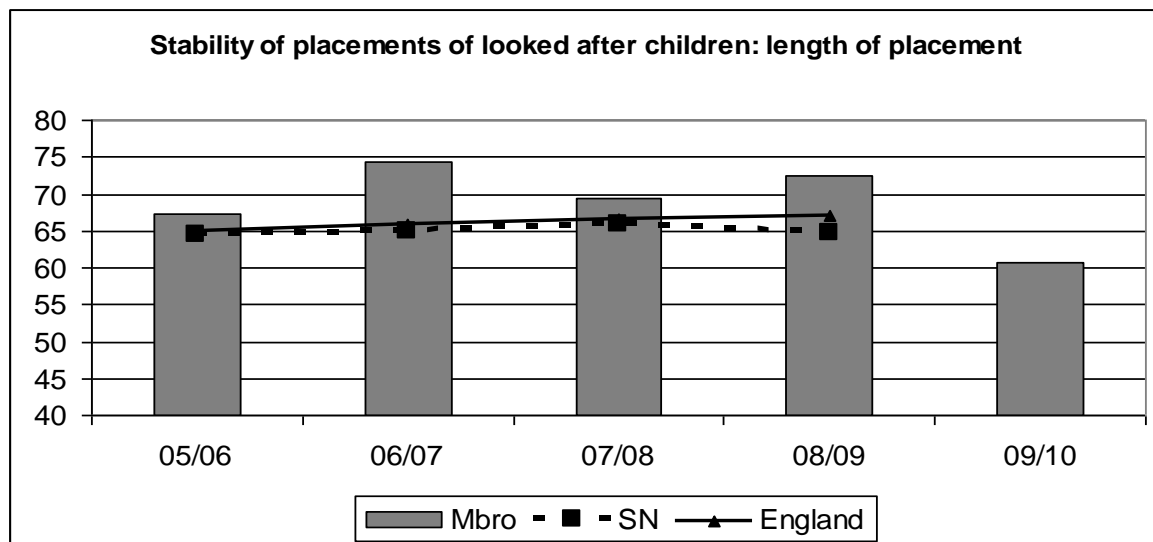
Foster Placement Breakdown	March 2009	March 2010
Middlesbrough Foster Carers – In Middlesbrough	75	56
Middlesbrough Foster Carers – Outside of Middlesbrough	32	45
Agency Foster Care in Middlesbrough	7	13
Agency Foster Care outside of Middlesbrough	70	99
Foster Placement with Relatives or Friends	29	33
Other LA Foster Carer	1	-
Total	214	246

Stability of Placements

13. The percentage of children looked after who had three or more separate placements during the year (NI 62) has improved slightly year on year in 2009/10 from 12.4% to 11.7%. This is above but broadly in line with national (10.7%) and statistical neighbour (10.8%) averages for 2008/09.



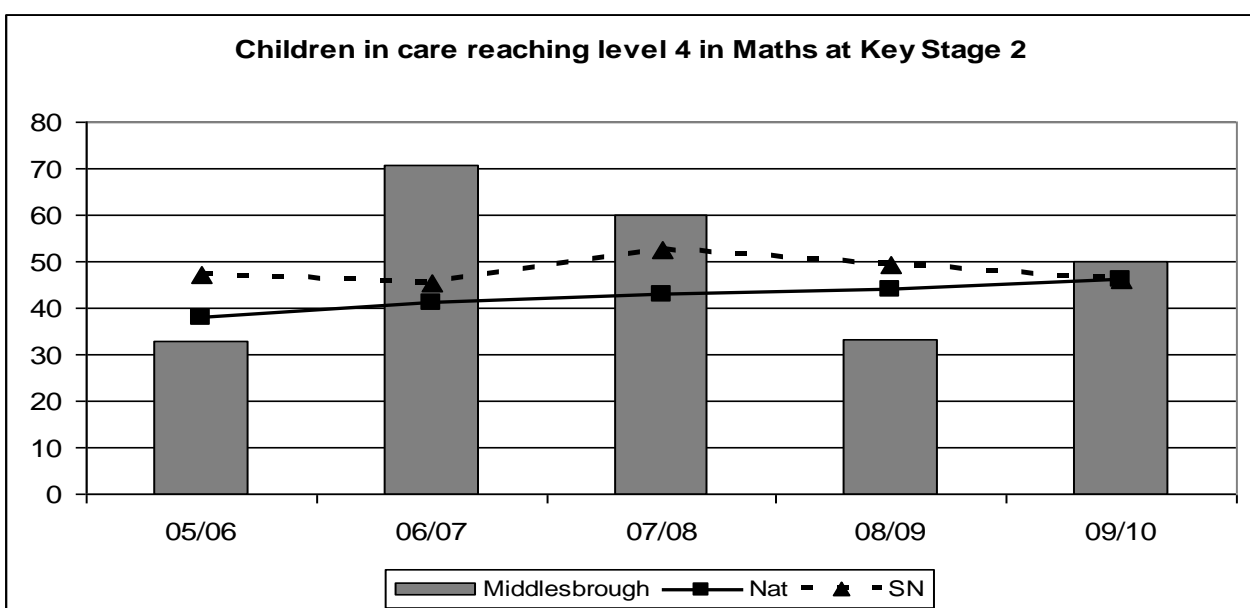
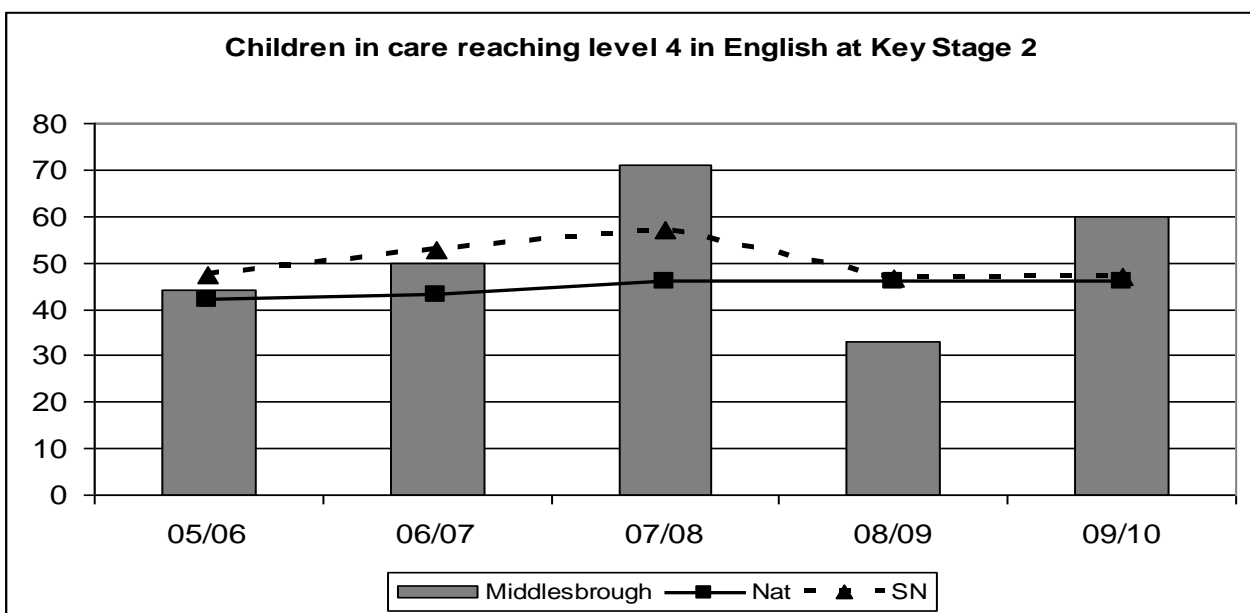
14. The percentage of children looked after who had been living in the same placement for at least two years (NI63) shows a significant drop in 2009/10 from 72.5% to 60.6%, dropping below national (66.4%) and statistical neighbour (64.9%) averages for the first time in the last five years.



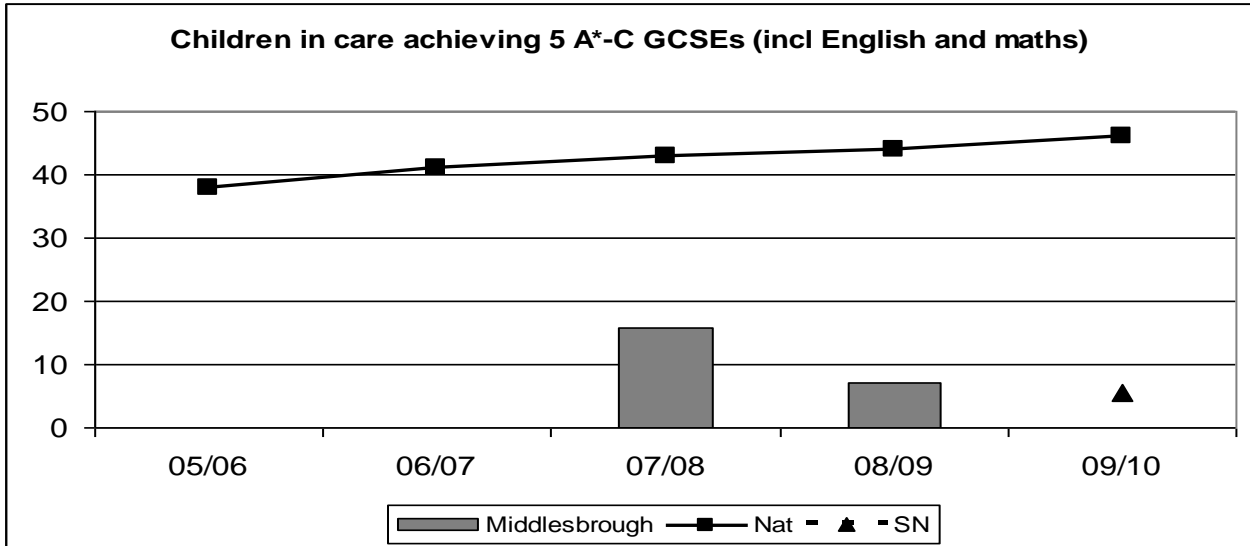
15. The significant increase in children looked after has meant an increased workload with insufficient social workers to maintain support levels for placements. Actions to improve performance in 2010/11 include:
- Ensuring that plans to maintain stability are observed and agreed.
 - Ensuring that the resources to maintain stability are discussed and identified.
 - Increased recruitment of foster carers to reduce pressure on placements and foster carers.

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

16. The cohort of children looked after who are eligible to sit end of key stage tests each year is typically very small, which can lead to significant changes in performance year on year based on the performance of just one or two young people achieving or failing to achieve the government's expected level.
17. In 2009, 10 children looked after by the authority sat end of Key Stage 2 tests compared to a cohort of 12 in 2008. The performance trend suggests a significant improvement in achievement in both English (NI 99) and Maths (NI 100) tests, but the number of young people achieving Level 4+ increased by 2 in English and by 1 in Maths. Performance at Key Stage 2 has returned to levels above both the national and statistical neighbour averages for both subjects.

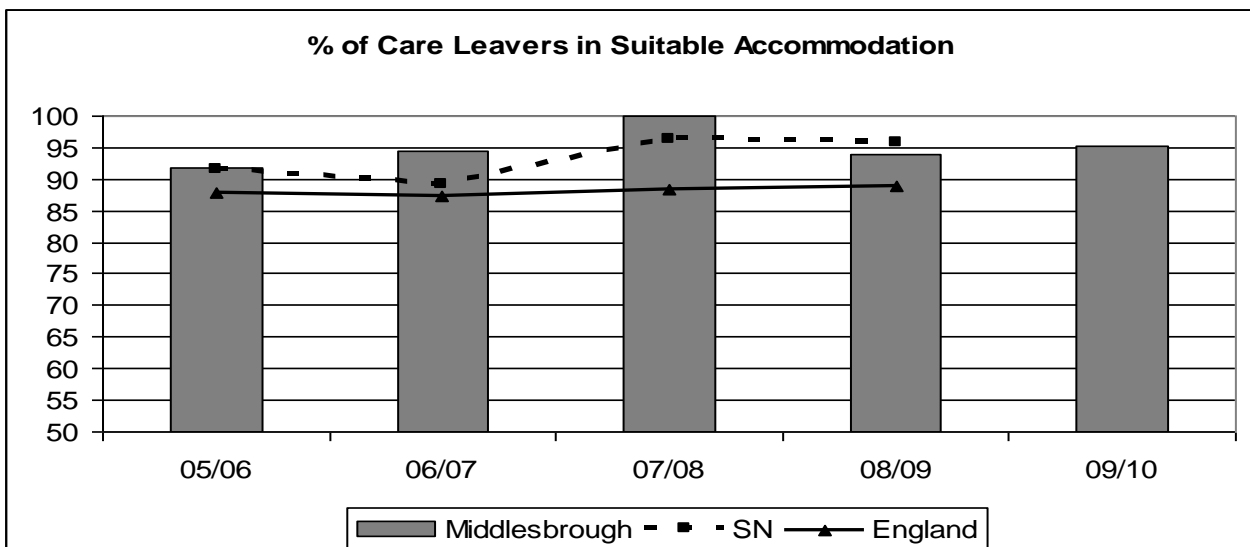


18. In 2009, nine children looked after by the authority sat end of Key Stage 4 tests compared to a cohort of 14 in 2008. None of the nine achieved the government's headline measure of 5 or more grade A*-C GCSEs including English and maths (NI 101). All of the young people in the cohort were entered for at least one GCSE and all secured at least one pass at grade G or above.

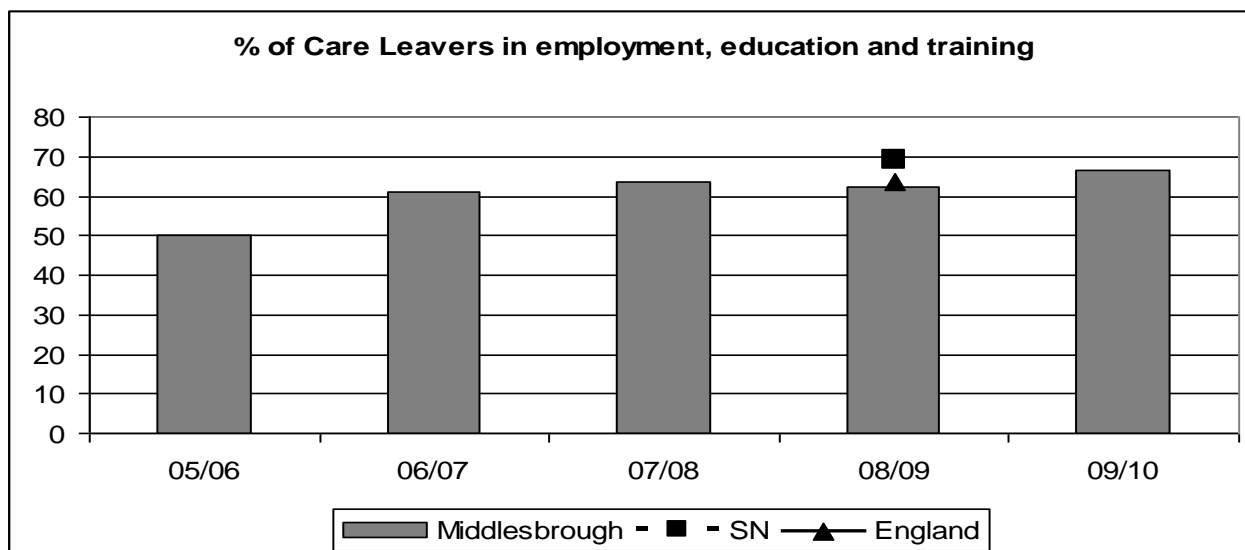


CARE LEAVERS

19. The cohort of care leavers is also typically very small each year. In 2009/10, the cohort comprised 21 care leavers compared with 16 in 2008/09. Again, this can result in significant changes in performance year on year based on the outcomes for one or two young people.
20. Both of the national indicators for care leavers show year on year improvement.
21. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (NI 147) at 95.2% remains above the available national comparator level for 2008/09 and is in line with statistical neighbours. All but one care leaver were deemed to be in suitable accommodation as of 31st March 2010.



22. The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (NI 148) at 66.7% shows sustained improvement and remains broadly in line with both the available national and statistical neighbour comparators for 2008/09.



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

23. 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/RISK ASSESSMENT

24. The sustained and significant rise in the number of children looked after by the authority will increase pressure on the services providing support for children and their families. Targeted support for the education of children looked after will be provided through the development of the virtual head teacher's role, which will ensure that the progress of children looked after is monitored and that schools and other settings are monitored and challenged in the support they provide and the impact that they are having on educational outcomes.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

25. There are no immediate financial or legal implications arising from this report. The table at paragraph 6 details, by ward, the number of children coming into local authority care in 2009/10.

RECOMMENDATION

26. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the statistical update on children looked after.

REASON

27. To ensure that elected Members are aware of current information regarding outcomes for children looked after by the local authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

28. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Middlesbrough's 2010 CLA 903 return to the Department for Education

AUTHOR: David David, Performance Manager

TEL NO: 01642 728103

Address: P O Box 234, Middlesbrough, TS1 2XH

Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>