

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2018 - 2021



In partnership with



Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 - 2021

Contents:

Introduction:

Section 1

Our Priorities For Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Looked After Children: The National Picture

Looked After Children in Middlesbrough

What Children and Young People Looked After Say?

Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership

Section 2

Achieving the Priorities

Priority 1: Our Children and Young People are Respected and Involved

Priority 2: Our Placements are Safe and Meet the Needs of Our Children and Young People

Priority 3: Positive Relationships and Identity

Priority 4: Our Children and Young People are supported to improve their Physical, Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Priority 5: Our Children and Young People are encouraged to reach their Educational Employment and Training Potential

Priority 6: Our Young People Moving into Adulthood are Supported to Achieve Their Full Potential in Life

Priority 7: Improve the role of the Corporate Parent

Appendices

- 1 Pledge to Looked after Children and Young People
- 2 Care Leavers Charter
- 3 Statutory and Legal Context to Corporate Parenting
- 4 Corporate Parenting Training for Elected Members

Middlesbrough's Vision for Looked after Children and Young People

Introduction:

All children, regardless of circumstance need to know someone is fighting their corner, listening to their wishes and feelings and doing what they can to champion the very best outcomes for them. It is our belief that all children should be provided with **the Best Start in Life** and this should be no different for our Looked after Children.

As Lead Member for Children's Services and Executive Director of Children's Services we have a special responsibility to ensure that the Council acts as a Corporate Parent for all children and young People in our care. This means, as a Council, we need to ensure each individual child and young person has their own needs addressed and is truly being well Looked After.

We want everything the best parents want for their children, we want our children and young people to feel happy and healthy, both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and any form of exploitation. We want to support our children and young people each step of the way as they move on into adult life.

We strongly believe that our children and young people are the future of Middlesbrough, and as corporate parents it is our responsibility to ensure we will deliver the best possible services for children and young people in our care.

We are ambitious for our children and young people, we want them to achieve their potential, especially at school, to make the most of the learning opportunities that they are offered and to participate in decision making that affects their care and their lives. We want our Looked after children and young people to work with us, along with their parents and carers in shaping how we manage and organise the planning and delivery of our services. We are proud of our children and young people and will take every opportunity to celebrate their achievements and support them when things don't go right.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy invites us to collectively work together with a common purpose, putting the care of our Looked after Children and Young People at the heart of everything we do.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy is informed by our Sufficiency Strategy. Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation

for children in care within their local area. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to act strategically through their commissioning and planning activity to address any gaps in provision and to make sure they have a range of suitable quality accommodation which meets the full range of the needs of their looked after children population.

The Children Act 2008 defines sufficiency as “a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children’s Trust partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.” However, the scope is not restricted to just making good quality placements; the intention is to co-ordinate the range of activity across Children’s Services, including a clear focus on supporting families to stay together, wherever it is safe to do so, thus minimising the need for children to come into care, or supporting their timely return to their families.

As with any document, this strategy will only be of benefit if it is owned by key decision makers and used to inform service planning and development. Consequently, the Multi-Agency Looked after Partnership (MALAP) is responsible for the oversight and updating of the Sufficiency Plan and Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Multi-Agency Looked after Partnership (MALAP) will ensure that these remain living documents that are regularly revised and refined as our knowledge and understanding of the needs of children and young people in care develop.

Vision and Principles

Principles

Our work is informed by a series of principles or 'rights'

- The right to a well-planned service with strong leadership and governance
- The right to family life
- The right to have contact with family members and other who are important to our Looked after Children and Young people
- The right to be respected no matter what your individual circumstances are
- The right place to live
- The right support
- The right to a voice
- The right to a positive transition on into adult life

The strategy and sufficiency plan has been developed in response to these core principles, within each principle consideration is given to:

- What this says about our vision
- How these fundamental rights link to our underpinning principles
- What we know about the national picture and about our service
- What we have already done
- What we plan to do

Although each 'right' is considered in turn, all sections are co-dependent, for example success in ensuring all our children have the right place to live will depend on safely reducing the numbers of Looked after Children and Young people increasing placement choice. Well planned services are dependent on children having the right to a voice that is heard and valued and used a means of measuring the effectiveness of service delivery.



Councilor Mike Carr

Lead Member
Children's Services



Helen Watson

Executive Director of Children's Services

Section 1

Our Priorities For Looked After Children and Care Leavers

These priorities are informed by what our Looked after Children and young people say is important to them. We have identified seven key priorities which are at the heart of this strategy this includes:

- Our children and young people are respected and involved in decision making
- Placements for looked after children and young people are safe and meet their individual needs
- Children and young people are supported to develop positive relationships that promote their identity
- Our children and young people will be supported to improve their physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Our children and young people are encouraged and supported to reach potential through education, employment and training
- Our young people are supported to move on into adult life where they can contribute and feel valued
- Improve the role of the corporate parent role to ensure we are held accountable for delivery of good services that support children and young people to achieve best outcomes.

Looked After Children: The National Picture

The number of Looked after Children nationally has continued to rise; increasing steadily over the last eight years. There were 75,420 Looked after Children as at 31st March 2018, an increase of 4% compared to 31 March 2017 and an increase of 13% compared to 2011.

In 2017/18 the number of children in foster care continued to rise; of the 75,420 Looked After Children at 31st March 2018, 55,200 (73%) were cared for in foster placements – the same proportion as last year.

At 31st March 2018, 56% of children Looked After are male, 44% female and these proportions have varied little over recent years.

The age profile has continued to change over the last four years, with a steady increase in the number and proportion of older children. 62% of children Looked after were aged 10 years and over in 2017/18 compared with 56% in 2012. There has been a reduction in the number and proportion of children aged 1-4 years (from 18% of the Looked After population in 2011/12 to 13% in 2017/18), while the number and proportion of children aged under 1 year has remained the same (6% in 2011/12 and the same in 2017/18).

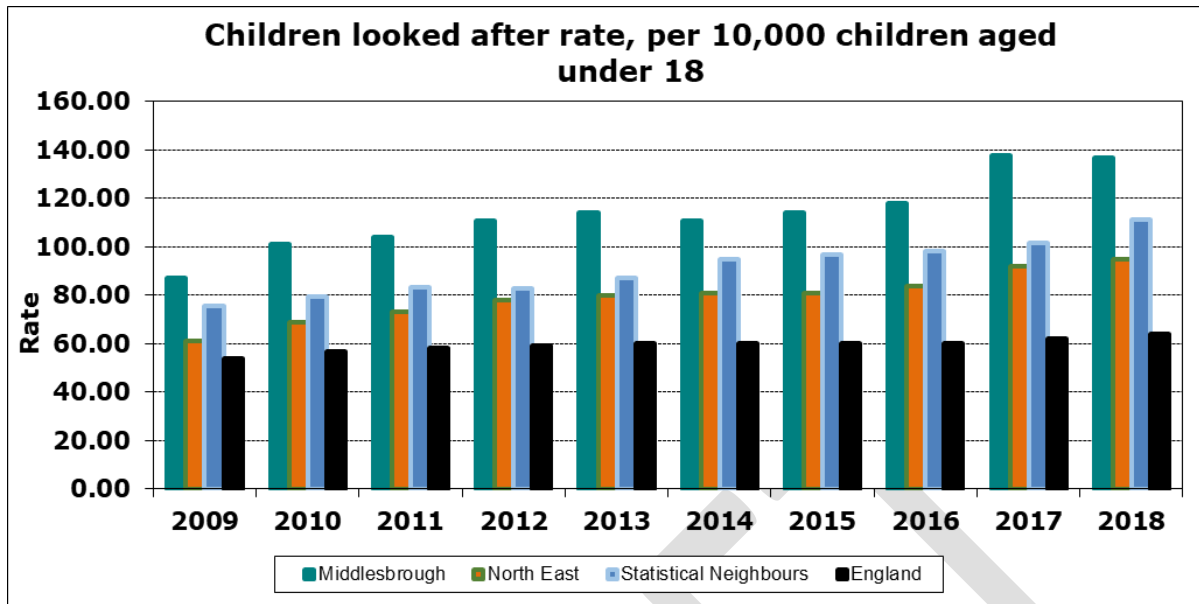
Placements during the Year

Of all Looked after Children aged under 16 at 31st March 2018 who had been in care for a continuous period of at least 2.5 years, 70% had been in the same placement for at least two years or were placed for adoption. Of all Looked after Children at 31st March 2018 10% had had three or more placements.

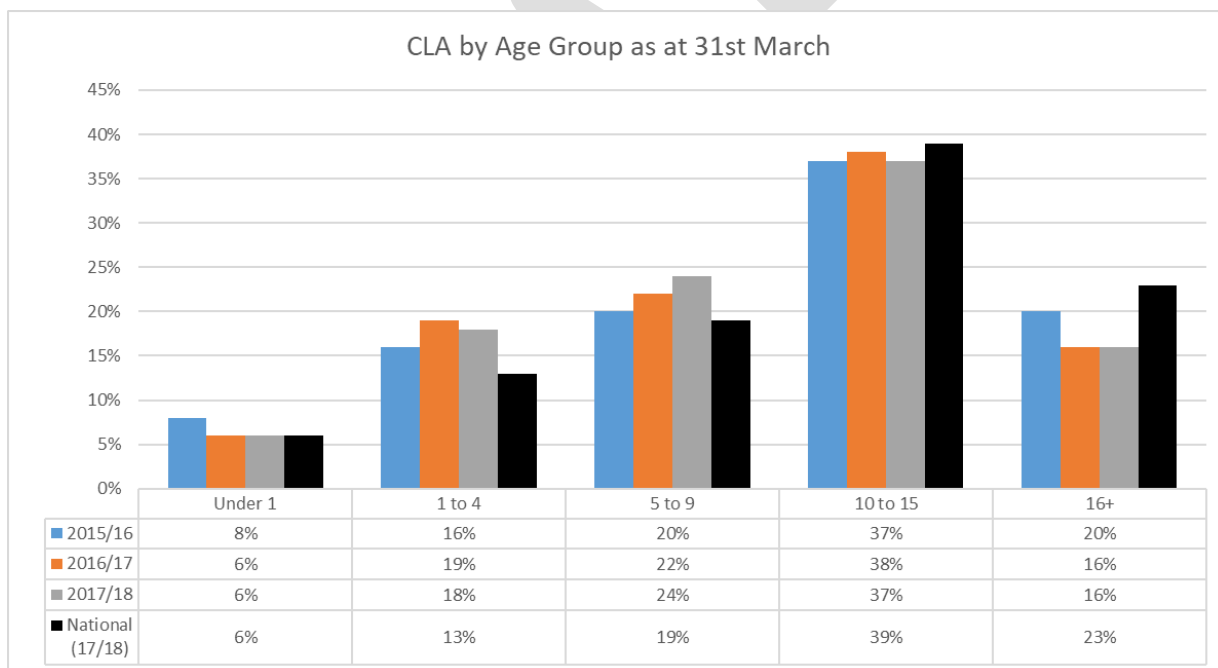
Looked after Children in Middlesbrough

The position locally in Middlesbrough is similar to that seen nationally, with a steady increase in numbers since 2010/11. As at the 31st March 2018 there were 445 Looked after Children, up slightly from 444 at the 31st March 2017. The rate (137 per 10,000) remains higher than the council's nearest statistical neighbours average (111.4 per 10,000), the North East (95) and England (64). Middlesbrough has the 3rd highest rate of Looked after Children nationally, after Hartlepool (139), and Blackpool (185). Middlesbrough has the 2nd highest rate of Looked after Children compared to our Statistical Neighbours, and 2nd highest in the North East. The level of Looked after Children needs to be considered in the context of the number of children who

are subject to child protection plans with a rate of 82.1 per 10,000 which is significantly higher than the national rate of 45.3 per 10,000



Age profile of Looked After Children as at 31st March 2018



The largest cohort of children in Middlesbrough’s Looked after population are between the ages of 10 to 15 years. It is planned that through our refreshed Edge of Care offer targeted at this age range that this cohort will reduce over the coming year and increase sufficiency of placement choice. Children under 5 years are predominantly placed with suitably assessed and approved in-house fostering placements pending permanency arrangements.

Children becoming Looked After

162 children became Looked After in Middlesbrough during 2017/18, a reduction on 2016/17 when the number was 254. 60% of children becoming looked after during 2017/18 were male (98), 62% were due to Abuse/Neglect (101), 49% (79) became Looked After on a Section 20 and 41% (66) on an Interim Care Order. There is a fairly even spread across age ranges of children being taken into care; 22% (35) were under 1, 25% (40) were aged 1-4, 25% (41) aged 5-9, and 24% (39) aged 10-16, with only 4% (7) aged 16+.

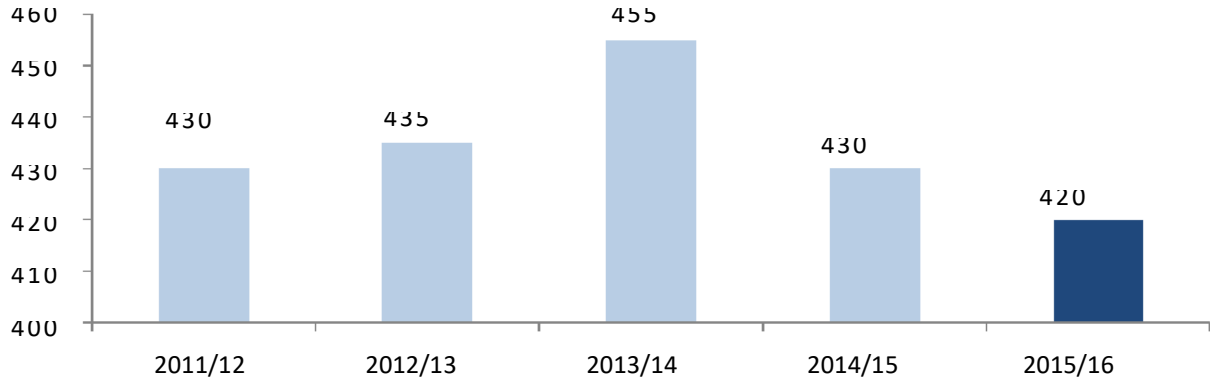
Middlesbrough is higher than both regional and national in all age brackets, with the exceptions of under 1 year old regionally (24%), 10-16 both regionally and nationally (25% and 28% respectively), and 16+ both regionally and nationally (6% and 18% respectively)

85% of children in care on 31st March 2018 were White British, with the remaining 15% spread evenly across the other ethnic groups. The percentage of White British is 10% higher than the picture in England (75%) but lower than the North East (92%).

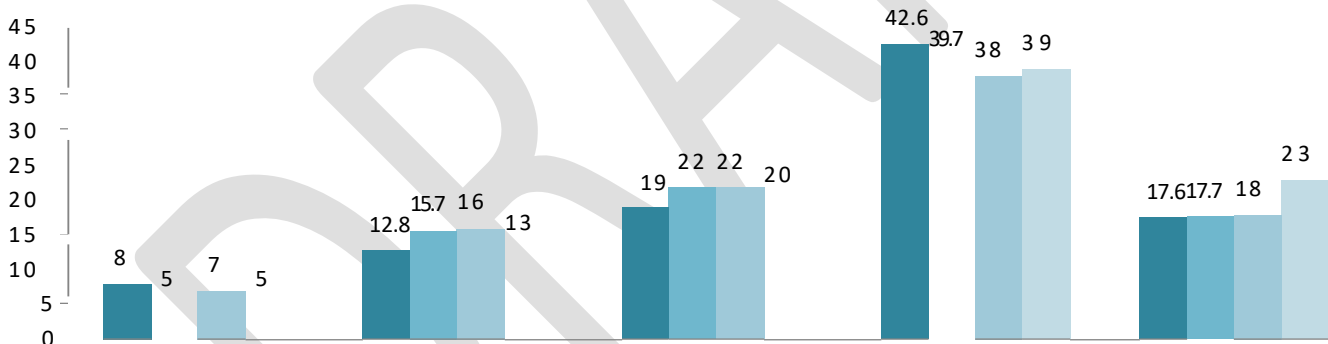
71% of all Looked after Children at 31st March 2018 were cared for in foster placements, compared to 77% regionally and 73% nationally. In contrast to the regional (6%) and national (6%) picture 13% were placed with parents. 68% of children looked after continuously for more than 2.5 years had been in the same placement for more than 2 years, which is slightly lower than the latest published national rate of 70%. 5% had been in 3 or more placements in the last 12 months, compared to 9% regionally, and 10% nationally.

In addition to the reducing pattern of children being in care at each year end there is also a local pattern of reducing numbers of children being Looked After at any point.

Children looked after at any point in year - excluding those who receive a series of short term breaks



Contrary to the national position there have been no unaccompanied asylum seeking children in care at year end since this was recorded in 2010/11.



Age Profile of Children in Care at 31/03/2016

Age profile of looked after children at year end

Under 1 1 to 4 5 to 9 10 to 15 16+

■ Middlesbrough (%) 15-16 Middlesbrough (%) 14-15 North East (%) 15-16 England (%) 15-16

	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16+
Middlesbrough (number) 15-16	23	37	55	123	51
Middlesbrough (number) 14-15	15	47	66	119	53
Middlesbrough (%) 15-16	8	12.8	19	42.6	17.6
Middlesbrough (%) 14-15	5	15.7	22	39.7	17.7
North East (%) 15-16	7	16	22	38	18
England (%) 15-16	5	13	20	39	23

There were higher proportions of children aged 10-15 and under 1 in Middlesbrough than there are nationally as at the end of March 2016.

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What we are doing to ensure that children and young people have a voice and influence in Middlesbrough.

- The Mind of My Own app was approved through consultation with the Children in Care Council. A focus group was held with young people to go through the app and agree on some points to ensure that it works well in Middlesbrough. The Children in Care Council have also attended the training for the Mind of My Own app in order that they can continue to offer support direction to professionals as this continues to be promoted across Children's Social Care.
- The Children in Care Council has taken part in the Regional Children in Care Conference, they ran a workshop on family contact which is an important issue for children and young people in Middlesbrough. The Corporate Parenting Board makes sure that the Children in Care Council voice is heard and actions are taken to improve services based on their views and experiences of having received services. The Corporate Parenting Board has requested that the workshop from the Regional Children in Care Council Conference is recorded to allow its message to be circulated to all the relevant staff in Children's Services and to be used in training sessions for Corporate Parenting Board members. The messages heard from this workshop will also be used to as part of our training programme.
- The Have Your Say Council group is made up of looked after children between the ages of 7-13 years. This group of children will work with the Children in Care Council on projects to support change and delivery of services and feed in to the Corporate Parenting Board, Participation/Engagement work strand of the MALAP and the wider MALAP meeting. A representative from each group will attend the meetings and have a lead person who can support them within the meetings.
- Middlesbrough's Recruitment Policies and Procedures have been reviewed and reflect the importance of children/ young people's voices throughout the process. Currently young people sit as a separate interview panel and their views are fed into any appointment made. Plans are in place to formalise young people's

involvement in recruitment processes and training is to be provided to young people to support development of their expertise in this area. Human Resource Procedures have been reviewed to ensure whole council approach is in place to support children and young people to be involved in all aspects of recruitment.

- The Coram Voice – Bright spots survey ran in Middlesbrough in October 2018. All Looked after Children and Care Leavers were given the opportunity to take part in either the ‘Your Life, Your Care’ survey or the ‘Your Life, Beyond Care’ survey. The findings will be presented at a Voice and Influence Conference and used as a benchmark for services to make change.
- The Voice and Influence Conference is for all front line staff. The Children in Care Council is organising and running this conference. They will run a workshop on a topic of their choice and be involved in every aspect of the conference planning.
- A Children in Care Council apprentice will be employed to support both the Have Your Say Council and the Children in Care Council and wider Voice and Influence work in Middlesbrough.
- CiCC is involved in Service inspections and Peer Challenges. CiCC will also feed into the SEND team through the SEND Challenge Day. This ensures that the young people have influence and understanding at both strategic and operational levels in order to improve practice based on the voice of young people.
- A member from each Children in Care group will be invited to the MALAP meeting and will feed into the wider MALAP group.

How Corporate Parenting Works in Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough has a well-established model of governance for Corporate Parenting, it includes well-defined decision making processes in the council and across partner agencies with clear links to the Children in Care Council. The Council regularly reviews how we deliver these functions and that there are tangible outcomes through active and regular feedback from children and young people which we strongly value.

Delivery of the Corporate Parenting Pledge is monitored through the Corporate Parenting Board and the Multi-Agency Looked after Children's Partnership (MALAP). Informed by feedback from the Children in Care Council.

The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services and includes attendance of Elected Members, Chief Executive for the Council, Executive Director of Children's Services, other relevant senior officers including the Virtual Head. The Board is supported through the contributions from health partners. The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to take a clear strategic lead in ensuring better outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board role is to:

- Oversee and lead on achieving progress on this strategy, making sure that all services provide support and take action to honour the pledges made to Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Engage with the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers to ensure that there is meaningful communication and partnership in delivering the pledge and Care Leavers Charter

The Multi-Agency Looked after Children Partnership, is chaired by the Head of Service for Looked after Children and is a multi-agency senior officer group which drives plans in all aspects of our work in relation to our statutory and aspirational work with children in care and care leavers and leads on performance on behalf of the board.

The Multi Agency Looked after Children Partnership will:

- Oversee the Corporate Parenting action plan, monitor progress and agree actions as appropriate – reporting on its progress to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Develop exception and summary reports for presentation to the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Report on performance and activity.

Multi Agency Looked after Partnership Sub Groups will oversee the work streams to deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy according to the following areas including:

- Education
- Training and Employment
- Health
- Have your say– Children In Care Council
- Placements and Accommodation

Section 2

Achieving the Priorities

Priority 1: Our Children and Young People are Respected and Involved

What we need to improve

- We need to ensure our Children in Care Council has a prominent position within the governance arrangements for Looked after Children and Care Leavers so that their views are taken into account and acted upon.
- We need to develop our approach to Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council, building on the existing group and establishing a structured

approach to engaging care leavers, younger Looked after Children and those placed at a distance

- We need to ensure that the views of young people are at the heart of the LAC review process and are sought in a timely and facilitative way.
- We need to improve on evidencing how we have responded to a young person's views and the difference this has made, outlining reasons for our response
- We have more to do to ensure Looked after Children and Care Leavers maximise their take-up of rights and entitlements through more accessible information available in a range of formats, including e-materials.
- Looked after Children and care leavers engage in structured interviews at key points and responses demonstrate a high level of positive feedback on the services they've received. However, in order to make the most of this process, findings need to be systematically collected, collated and reported, to ensure this information presents an accurate picture and is useful in informing service development.
- We need to continue to develop our approach to participation and engagement, building capability across the service so that we can hear and respond to the voices and views of children, young people and their families.
- We need to build on existing celebration activities to ensure we recognise the achievements of the wider group of Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- We need to develop our approach to involving Looked after Children and care leavers in our recruitment processes, ensuring we create a sustainable and flexible approach that values young people's involvement.

What we will do:

- Ensure staff have the knowledge, skills and commitment to engage and listen to Looked after Children and care leavers in effective ways, appropriate to their age, ability and interest.
- Ensure we maximise the involvement of Looked after Children and care leavers in decisions made that affect them and provide feedback on any actions that are/are not taken as a result.

- Ensure that Looked After Children and care leavers are aware of their entitlements and know where to access information, how to seek advice and support, and understand how to make a complaint.
- Ensure that the Council and its partners support Children in Care Council activities and deliver against the commitments made in Our Pledge and the 'Care Leavers' Charter'.
- Ensure that Looked after Children and Care Leavers' engagement and participation is embedded within each priority of our Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- Ensure we celebrate the achievements of all of our Looked after Children and Care Leavers.
- Increase the number of Looked After Children and Care Leavers who are involved in our Children in Care Council activities

What this means in practice

- Looked after Children are visited at least every 6 weeks and are seen alone.
- Contact with care leavers takes place set against need and in agreement with our Young People
- Looked after Children and care leavers are active participants in their review and meet their Independent Reviewing Officer regularly, and before each upcoming review.
- We provide a variety of ways for children and young people to express their views including independent advocacy.
- Having a strong and active Children in Care Council which is able to help influence and shape the delivery of services through direct access to senior officers of Children's Services.
- Looked after Children and Care Leavers are regularly involved in the recruitment and interview process for Children's Social Care staff.

Priority 2: Our Placements are Safe and Meet the Needs of Our Children and Young People

What we need to improve

- We have more to do to secure sufficiency in our fostering options, particularly when placing siblings and adolescents, and to develop a bespoke offer for kinship carers.
- Increase the number of in-house foster carers who are local to the Middlesbrough area through improved recruitment and retention processes.
- We have more to do in driving solutions for children and young people to enjoy choice of placement, including with their siblings
- To increase the resilience of our placement sufficiency we are developing our fostering offer, residential provision to include 16 plus supported living arrangements, edge of care and commissioned services to drive improved choice and range of placements.

What we will do:

- Implement our Sufficiency Strategy to help deliver improved options for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.
- Ensure that we have a range of placements available for our Children and Young people through our new Marketing Strategy and increase in staffing within our Fostering Service to progress stages 1 and 2 of the assessment process.
- Visits to all placements at a minimum of every 6 weeks
- Support young people to successfully stay at home and keep families together through our edge of care offer
- Improve brokerage to improve choice and placement stability
- Increase the number of foster placements available for sibling groups and adolescents alongside parent and baby placements

- Reduce the number of emergency placements
- Drive a robust commissioning strategy including market development based on management insight and children's feedback.
- Ensure Looked after Children and young people have a variety of ways to express any concerns they have and act promptly on these.
- Placements changes are kept to a minimum
- Our Edge of Care offer will support children and families to live safely together through bespoke packages of intervention and planned respite care.
- Strengthening our Fostering offer through an enhanced training and support programme for Foster Carers, including access to in house psychological services.
- We will also offer support via our Edge of Care Hub to Residential staff who work with some of our most complex young people.

What this means in practice

- Maximise permanency for children in care to ensure that where possible and appropriate, children in care are provided with stable placements via adoption, special guardianship or long term fostering.
- There are very few unplanned placement changes.
- Independent reviewing officers (IROs) meet with children and young people alone prior to their Looked after review in order that their views and wishes effectively form part of the review of their care plan.
- A clear escalation process is in place to ensure that IROs can bring concerns to the attention of managers in a timely manner.
- 'NYAS' is available for independent advocacy and we offer Independent visiting service to those young people who meet require this.
- Concerns and complaints are responded to promptly and the local authority designated officer (LADO) is involved if required. We will also use the information from complaints to improve practice.
- Develop further accommodation opportunities available for our young people and care leavers as they move towards adulthood.

- Social workers or managers visit placements, including residential, before moving children and young people to ensure the service they offer is of the best quality.
- Follow procedures and take a multi-agency approach when children and young people go missing ensuring that young people are listened to and action is taken to keep them safe.

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Priority 3: Positive Relationships and Identity

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, siblings in care, carers and their peers. Children and young people know who they are, why they are in care and understand their heritage. They feel valued by others, and their individual needs arising from race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or disability are understood and met.

We want to encourage our Looked after Children and young people to feel part of their local community and support them to be involved in a range of activities, including volunteer schemes and leisure activities.

What we need to improve

- Increase numbers of local, available placements to maintain local links and retain relationships.
- Facilitate Family Group Conferences to retain, and where appropriate, strengthen family and friend relationships.
- Undertaking Family Group Conferences to help young people be part of a strength based approach and to help understand the dynamics of their birth family.
- Ensure children and young people placed at a distance have equivalent access to leisure and cultural activities as their peers
- Ensuring as much information as possible is sought from parents, family and friends at the early stage of Children's Services involvement.
- Continue to invest in our life story work to reflect the story of the child and help them understand their experiences and background.

What we will do:

- Children and young people will be encouraged and have the opportunity to develop strong peer relationships
- Children and young people will be supported to sustain family relationships with parents, siblings and extended family in a safe and positive way that promotes their sense of attachment.

- Children and young people will have access to more specialist support if required to ensure needs are met through improved commissioned arrangements.
- We will develop coordinated strategy with partners to increase Looked after Children and care leavers' participation in extracurricular activities. We will do this through creative activities in consultation with children and young people
- Children and young people will be supported why they are Looked After in order that they can make sense of their journey through care.
- We will support children and young people to feel valued by others through further embedding our value base. We will promote individuality and show respect to others based on their individual needs arising from race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Respecting individuality will be at the heart of our practice.

What this means in practice

- Where possible, placements are local and priority is given to children and young people to help them continue in the same school or education establishment where this is in their best interests.
- A permanency planning process ensures that early decisions are made and any drift is avoided.
- Extended families are always considered as part of the planning process and children are placed with extended family where it is safe to do so.
- Contact supervisors are able to help facilitate contact with extended family and siblings where appropriate.
- Contact with family and siblings is always considered as part of planning including Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Plans
- A variety of activities is provided through the year for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.
- Leisure cards are available to support leisure opportunities for Looked after Children and Care leavers. This provides free access to gym and swimming in the borough's facilities.
- A genogram is undertaken for all young people to aid understanding of their family and identity.

- Life story work will be undertaken for all Looked after Children where there is a decision of permanency.
- At the point of placement a robust matching process will be in place to consider issues of identity and belonging.
- Where there is not the same cultural identity for the child/young person within their placement, opportunities to ensure close cultural links will be considered and sought accordingly.

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Priority 4: Our Children and Young People will be supported to improve their Physical, Emotional Health and Wellbeing

What we need to improve

- Closer working practices between Health and Social Care professionals to respond to the outcomes of health assessments ensuring all recommendations for children's individual health needs are acted upon.
- Responsive access to a range of counselling and therapies, if necessary, according to needs and ensure proactive support is offered as opposed to 'reactive treatment'.
- Health information is available with the child/young person to ensure knowledge and understanding of needs, particularly in times when there is a change of placement or circumstance.
- Identify ways for embedding the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) as a tool for assessing and evaluating the emotional needs of Looked after Children and Young People and using this information to inform reviewing and care planning.
- At points of change, or at significant times or anniversaries, good support is provided to the children and young people in a proactive way.
- Identifying in Care Plans and Pathway Plans what supports may help a child or young person's emotional wellbeing and give opportunities to facilitate this, e.g. through sport, hobby, musical instrument, etc.
- Develop further our understanding of the link between health, school, placement and family, and the impact this has on an individual's own sense of emotional wellbeing.

What we will do:

- The health needs of children and young people will be assessed and reviewed in a timely way and progressed with the young person's views at the heart of this.
- Where required children and young people will have access to specialist health services including those related to additional needs or disability.
- Our children and young people will be encouraged to lead healthy and active lifestyles.
- Our children and young people will have access to information around the risks of alcohol, and substance misuse and be appointed through specialist services if required.
- Develop clear actions to ensure health outcome targets are met for Looked after Children entitlements to: good access to health services, including where required advice on, healthy diet, sex education, obesity reduction, and increased physical activity.
- Children and young people have their need for any additional emotional support recognised and acted upon, ensure they are given the knowledge and skills to achieve emotional stability, resilience and self-confidence through effective partnership working.
- All children coming into care will have a Looked after Child medical, this will be reviewed annually by an appropriate health professional.

What this means in practice

- There is a good understanding of individual needs when developing care plans and understand what support is needed to provide a sense of security and belonging.
- Support the development good attachments to key adults in a child/young person's life and sustain these and where possible strengthen to improve a sense of wellbeing.
- Young people receive a health passport when they leave care, which is a comprehensive summary of their health history. Care Leavers also continue to

have access to substance misuse service, if required, with a planned transition to adult substance misuse services at an appropriate point.

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Priority 5: Our Children and Young People are encouraged to reach their educational potential

What we need to improve

- Improve the quality and consistency of Personal Education Plans
- Increase stability by reducing the number of children of who move school
- Raise awareness of educational system and issues across the social care workforce including foster carers
- Improve attendance and reduce exclusions
- Narrowing the gap in attainment between looked after children and their peers at every key stage

What we will do:

- Launch an electronic PEP system and embed it so that it is routinely used by social workers and designated teachers. Regularly audit and quality assure PEPs
- Implement a school move protocol in order to gate-keep, monitor and reduce the number of looked after children and young people who move schools
- Offer training to social workers on PEPs and school systems, organise a Foster Carers Education Conference
- Continue to operate the Intervention Centre to ensure that there is a broad range of provision for those young people who are fixed term excluded or waiting for a school place
- Implement the re-structure of the Virtual School and recruit permanent staff

What this means in practice

- All looked after children have a high quality, effective personal education plan
- The number of looked after children who move school mid-year is reduced and students only move in exceptional circumstances
- Social workers and foster carers will have a better understanding of PEPs, school and education systems

- All looked after children continue to receive their legal entitlement to education. There is no drift or delay for looked after children who move from one provision to another.
- A newly recruited, specialist workforce of PEP advisors work with schools to support children and young people to achieve their academic potential

Priority 6: Our Young People Moving Into Adulthood Will Be Supported to Achieve Their Full Potential in Life

What we need to improve

- Preparation for independence at an earlier stage for this to be built upon well before plans for moving are finalised.
- Accessibility and take up of health care and ensure young people are aware of the importance of dental appointments, staying healthy, etc.
- Improve range and quality of placement provision for young people leaving care aged 18 and over including options of supported and semi-supported accommodation.
- Maximise the use of the multi-agency Care Leavers accommodation panel to monitor the progress of care leavers accommodation plans, and identify themes and gaps with the intention of improving service delivery and strengthening multi-agency working.
- Improve the quality of our pathway planning through having a quality assurance auditing process with a view to evidencing an increase in the contribution from our young people into their planning.
- Continue to increase the numbers of Care Leavers aged 21 and over who return to the service to access support.

What we will do:

- Support children and young people to enter adulthood in a planned way, with a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education or training.
- Ensuring entitlements are made clear to all care leavers.

- Utilise the Transitions Panel to support the planning for young people from the age of 16, who may be eligible for support from Adult Services.

What this means in practice

- Allocating a personal advisor to all eligible young people at the age of 15 who will work alongside the allocated social worker until the young person transfers to the Pathways Leaving Care Team at the age of 16. A personal advisor will remain involved until the young person reaches the age of at least 21 and continue to offer support up to the age of 25.
- Clear expectations to be in place, to help young people prepare for adulthood and have the life skills to achieve this.
- Opportunities will be given for young people to build confidence over a prolonged period for more independence and self-responsibility.
- A range of accommodation options to be able to be considered to facilitate plans for young people leaving care.
- Ensure all necessary information has been obtained for the young people in a timely way that will be needed when moving towards adulthood, e.g. birth certificate, national insurance number, bank account, etc.
- Increase the number of young people in Staying Put arrangements.

Priority 7: Improve the role of the Corporate Parent

What we need to improve

- An increase in the sense of corporate responsibility across all the statutory agencies in the support for our Looked after Children and care leavers, improving the impact of multi-agency support.
- Ensure good mechanisms are in place for challenge and counter challenge, between social workers, carers, young people, etc., to realise the ambition we have for Looked after Children in Middlesbrough.
- Continue to develop the multi-agency Looked After partnership (MALAP) to help understand the effectiveness of our Corporate Parenting approach.
- Children in Care Council are active participants in the committee and able to contribute and offer challenge.

Raise awareness with all new staff employed by Middlesbrough Council with regard to their corporate parenting responsibilities.

What we will do:

- At the core of everything we do is our understanding of our responsibility as a Corporate Parent.
- Elected Members and council officers will take a lead role in raising awareness of the needs of children in care and care leavers with all council departments and partner agencies.
- Promote the role of all Elected Members as corporate parents and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place by the Council to enable all members to fulfil their statutory responsibilities in this area.

What this means in practice

- The Corporate Parenting Board meets quarterly and is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services.
- Training about their responsibilities as a corporate parent has been provided for Elected Members and is well attended.
- Listen to the voice of children and young people in our care, and those leaving care, either directly or indirectly, through national and local inspection reports, service user surveys, independent reviewing officer's reports, reports from advocates, and other professionals, and use what we learn to improve services and outcomes.
- The Children in Care Council are active participants in the Corporate Parenting Board and able to contribute and offer challenge.
- Raise awareness with all new staff employed by Middlesbrough Council with regard to their corporate parenting responsibilities.

Appendices

1. Pledge to Children and Young People who are looked after

Complementing the Pledge, the council and its partners support the principles, values and commitments as detailed in the Charter for Care Leavers produced by the Department for Education and the Care Leavers Foundation and amended by the Children and Care Council members to be more meaningful for them.

The Charter for Care Leavers is designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents. Middlesbrough Council has adopted the Charter and is committed to improving outcomes for Care Leavers as reflected in the charter.

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2. Charter for Care Leavers:

We Promise To;

Respect you as an individual

Support you to find out who you are

Celebrate your identity – as an individual living in their own area

Help you to express yourself in a good way

Value and support you through life events

To will listen to you by;

Taking our time, respecting you and doing our best to understand your point of view

Placing your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you

Informing you of any decisions and explaining how we have reached a decision

Providing easy access to the complaints, compliments and appeals processes

Making sure you know how to access an independent advocacy service

We will inform you by:

Giving you information about your journey through care in a way that you will understand

Keeping information up to date and correct

Making sure you know how to get current information once you leave Pathways

Explaining to you what information you are entitled to and support you to access it

Making sure you have information about your health history

We will support you by:

Completing your Pathway Plan with you from the age of 16 years

Being aware of any changes in your rights and what this means for you

Providing information and advice, practical, financial and emotional support

Being strong advocates for you

Encouraging you to make your own choices and giving you second chances

Understanding your needs and meeting them as best we can

Helping you learn from your mistakes and not judging you and providing continuous support

To find you a home we will:

Work with you to get ready for living on your own and make sure that you know the options available to you

Do everything we can to make sure you are happy, settled and feel safe when you move into your own home

Know that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again

Work together with other agencies e.g. Housing, Job Centre, and College, to help you stay in your home

We will be a life-long companion by:

Doing our best to help you overcome barriers when dealing with agencies

Treating you fairly and with respect

Helping you to be in control of your life and working with you at your pace

Supporting you where we can

3. Statutory and Legal Context to Corporate Parenting

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the overarching framework by providing the right of the child to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her. (Article 12).

Children Act 1989 is the primary legislation setting out local authority responsibility to children „in need“, including Looked after Children. Section 22 imposes a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extended the responsibility of the local authority to young people leaving care, requiring them to plan the young person’s transition to adulthood and provide on-going advice and assistance until at least the age of 21.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Guidance clarify the expectations of care planning and review for Looked after Children and strengthen the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to challenge when identified needs are not being met. The manager of the service is required to prepare an annual report that should be made available to corporate parents.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transitions to Adulthood for Care Leavers gives details of how care-leavers should be provided with comprehensive personal support so that they achieve their potential as they make their transition to adulthood. It includes the need for care-leavers to be living in suitable accommodation and receiving support to continue in education or training and to find employment.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 required all local authorities to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to review the care plans of Looked after Children, and the Act introduced Special Guardianship orders that provide permanence for children but are alternatives to adoption.3.3. Local authorities have been entitled to expect other agencies to assist them in discharging their functions since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 (Section 27) but this was not a statutory responsibility until the Children Act 2004.

The Children Act 2004 This Act introduced a duty on named agencies both to co-operate with the local authority (Section 10) and to ensure that they take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in fulfilling their own functions (Section 11). It also made provision for local authority areas to set up Children's Trusts, bringing together the relevant agencies, and to develop a children and young people's plan. These are not mandatory but can provide a mechanism for bringing relevant agencies and plans together so that children's needs are not lost.

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The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a duty on upper-tier local authorities and primary care trusts to undertake a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) of their local population.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 requires local authorities to take steps to secure sufficient suitable accommodation for Looked after Children within their area that meets their needs. It also strengthens the care planning process and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer in monitoring the plan, and children's health and education plans are essential components of this.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 has abolished primary care trusts and transferred responsibility for commissioning local health services, apart from primary care, to a Clinical Commissioning Group consisting of GP consortia. Primary care and specialist services are commissioned by the NHS Commissioning Board, who are also responsible for holding the Clinical Commissioning Groups to account. The Act also established Health and Well-being Boards, led by the Director of Public Health within the local authority, to improve the health and well-being of the local population and reduce health inequalities. Section 12 created a new duty for local authorities to take steps to improve the health of people in their area.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 has introduced a single remand order for children and young people under the age of 18 who are refused bail, which will mean that they become Looked After Children for the duration of the remand, and may mean that they are entitled to leaving care services.

Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children placed the contribution of NHS agencies towards meeting the needs of Looked After Children on a statutory footing for the first time. The role of the PCT was to analyse the health needs of Looked After Children, plan and commission services, and monitor and review their effectiveness. Strategic Health Authorities were expected to monitor the performance of PCT's and to play a developmental and supportive role. Although PCTs have been replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups, the government's mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board for 2013–2015 says: We expect to see the NHS, working together with schools and children's social services, supporting and safeguarding vulnerable, looked-after and adopted children, through a more joined-up approach to addressing their needs'.

Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked after Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities clarified the duty to actively support Looked after Children's education. Measures include the priority that must be given to Looked after Children in terms of school admission, restriction on the use of school exclusion and the introduction of personal education allowances to purchase tailored support.

Statutory Guidance: Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children requires local authorities to develop a plan to secure sufficient accommodation for Looked after Children within their local authority area and which meets their needs. They can only do this if they work in partnership with other agencies as the requirement is not just about accommodation and placements but also securing a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs and applies not only to Looked After Children but also those on the edge of care and at risk of custody.

Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. These roles are statutory and cover both the social care and education services of the local authority. These individuals should provide strong leadership and ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for children's wellbeing. They have particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children, including those for whom they are corporate parents. The Lead Member should provide *political* leadership whilst the Director of Children's Services should provide *professional* leadership.

The Equality Act 2010 places an additional responsibility on public organisations to consider the needs of Protected Characteristics (*age, disability, sex, ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity*) and the effect of changes on them. This legislation also asks public organisations to support communities to get along better and understand each other. Both requirements are valid for adults and children.

The 2012 Adoption Action Plan tackling Delay. This plan explains the changes the Government has made to speed up the adoption system in England. The action plan sets out a range of proposals to speed up the process for adopting children; to overhaul the service for prospective adopters; and to strengthen local accountability for the timeliness of adoption services.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017. This requires Local Authorities to publish a Local Offer for Care Leavers about services they provide and adds a new provision of the Children Act 1989, extending the entitlement to a Personal Adviser beyond the age of 21 to all care Leavers up to 25, whether or not they are in education or training.

The 2017 (ILAC) Ofsted Inspection Framework. This document sets out the Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

4. Corporate Parenting Training for Elected Members

Elected Members have a responsibility to ensure that services for our children and young people are good and to ensure there are sufficient resources and accommodation choice. Elected Members scrutinise services and have an overview of performance measures to ensure children in care are safe and services are effective.

All Elected Members can undertake training to ensure they have the knowledge to fulfil their safeguarding and Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

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