

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

<b>CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STATISTICAL UPDATE</b>
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**Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr**

**Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings**

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2011**

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### **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

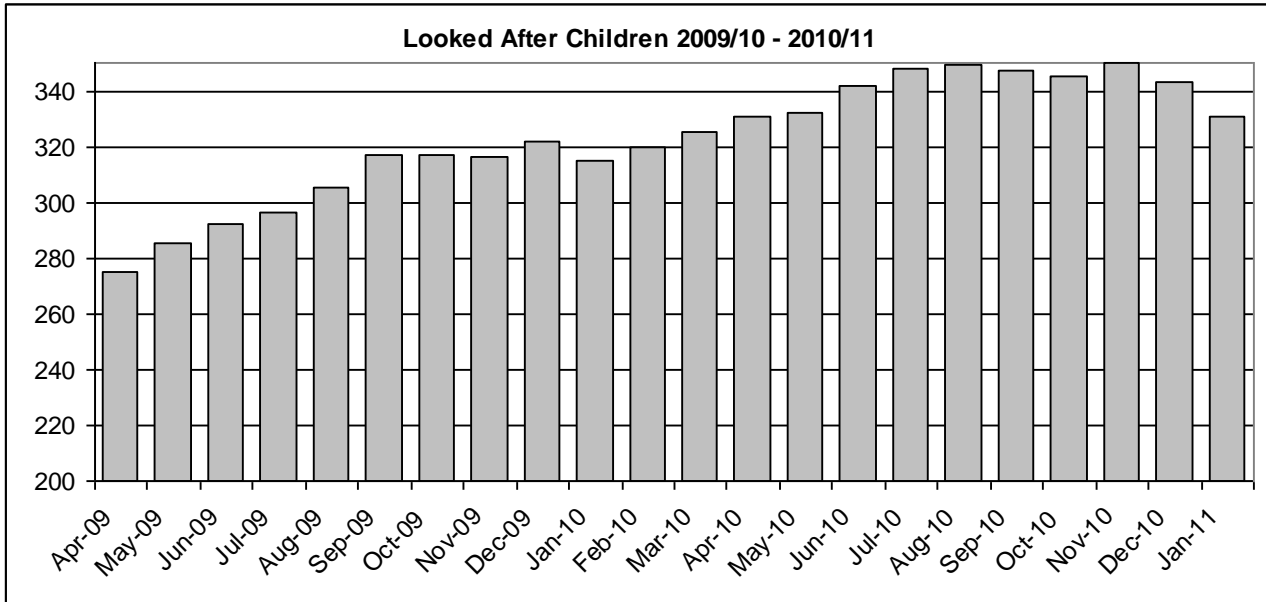
Non-urgent   
Urgent report

### **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.

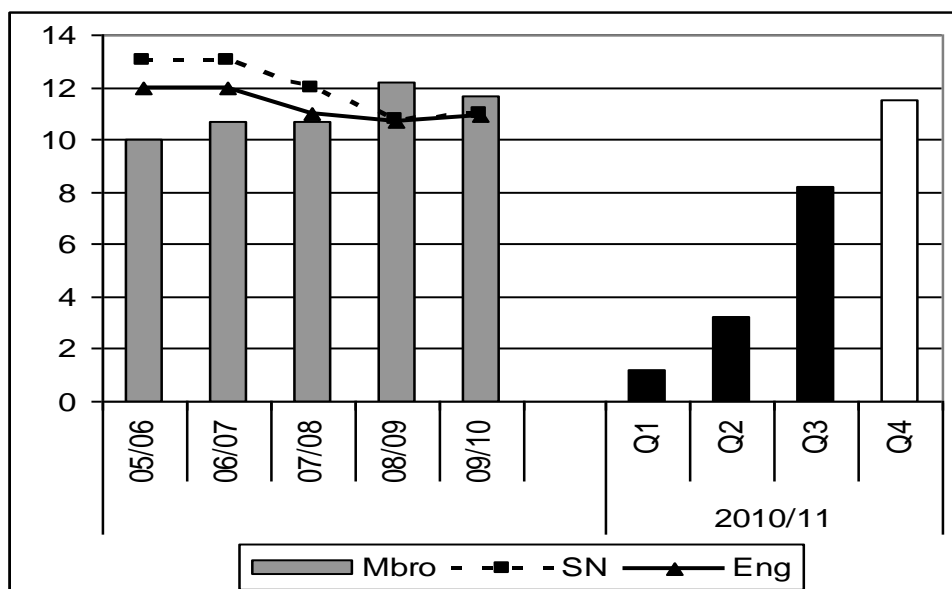
## NUMBERS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

7. The number of looked after children has shown a small but continued reduction over the last three months, falling by 5% between November and January from 350 to 331. This brings the number of looked after children back to the level experienced at the start of the financial (April 2010) and represents a 2% increase on March 2010 compared to the 19% increase experienced between March 2009 and March 2010.



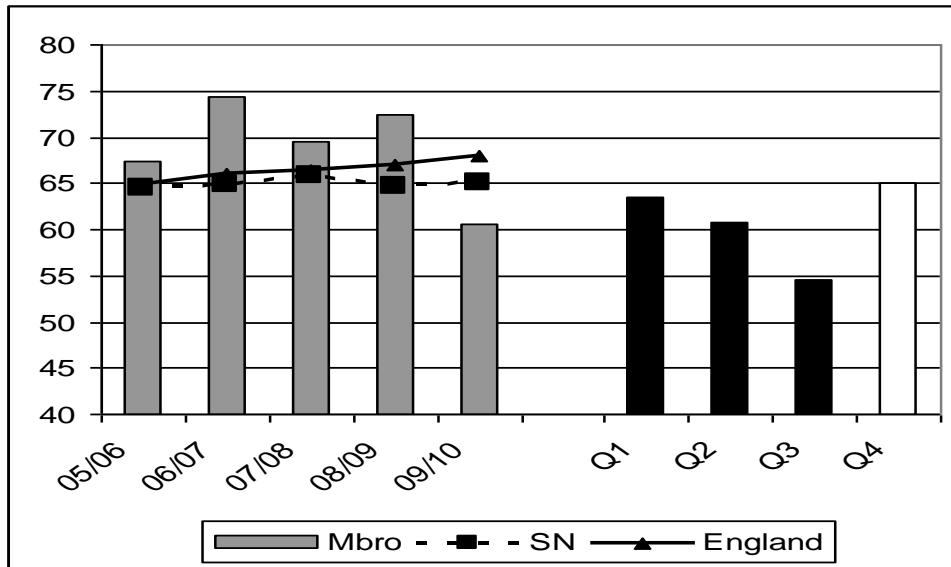
## STABILITY OF PLACEMENTS

8. The percentage of children looked after who have had three or more separate placements during the year (NI 62), more than doubled between quarters two and three from 3.2% to 8.2%. Performance, however, remains in line with the target trajectory, reflecting the good levels of placement stability sustained in the first half of 2010/11.



9. Despite the dip in performance, outcomes for children have improved, as in many cases the move to a third placement has fulfilled the permanence plan for the child. Current performance remains within the top quartile for 2008/09. The annual target (11.5%) was set within the range of the statistical neighbour and regional averages.

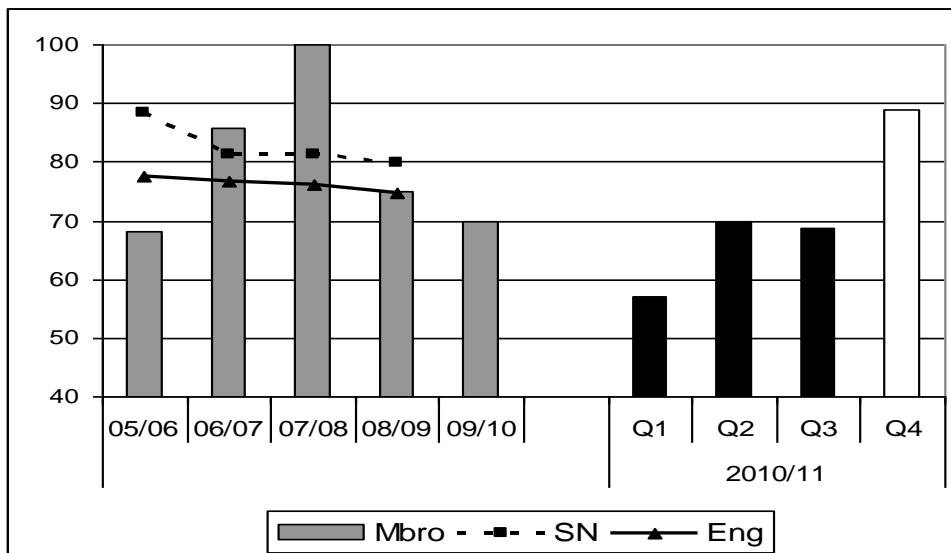
10. The percentage of children looked after who had been living in the same placement for at least two years (NI63) has continued to decline into quarter three, and at 54.5% is well below all comparator averages.



11. The cohort has decreased in size as there were a number of children within this cohort who had spent time in placements that were not their final placement. These moves have now taken place and there has been a consequent impact on the size of the cohort. Despite the impact on the indicator, this means that there has been a positive outcome for at least four children who have been, or will be, adopted.

## ADOPTION PLACEMENTS

12. The percentage of looked after children placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision being made fell slightly in quarter three but performance remains broadly in line with 2009/10's out turn.



13. The cohort of children for this indicator is typically very small and can vary significantly from year to year, e.g. there were 10 cases in total during 2009/10 whilst there have been 16 cases up to quarter three in 2010/11. This can cause significant swings in the percentages reported year on year and it does not accurately reflect the number of children being placed for adoption, e.g. the 7 children placed for adoption within the timescale in 2009/10 produced a performance figure of 70% whilst the 69% reported for quarter three relates to 11 children having been placed for adoption so far this year, a 57% increase in the number of placements.

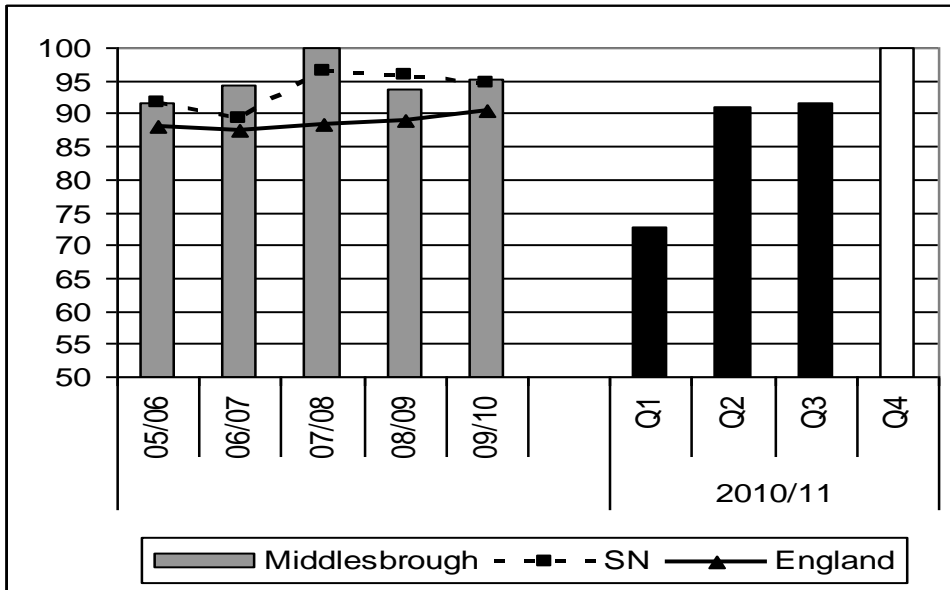
- 14. Looking forward, there are a number of children currently in final placements that will lead to adoption.

**EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

- 15. The Corporate Parenting Board received a separate report on the educational achievement of children looked after at its January 2011 meeting.

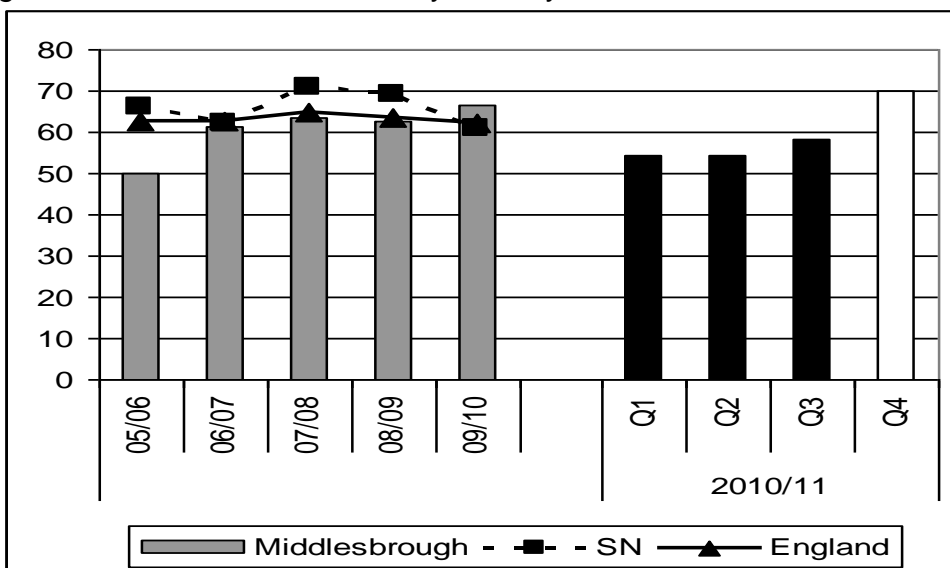
**CARE LEAVERS**

- 16. The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation (NI 147) improved slightly in quarter three, increasing from 91% to 92% and moving local performance into Ofsted's upper median quartile for 2008/09.



- 17. Current performance remains above the national average (90.3%) for 2009/10 but below the statistical neighbour average (94.5%), which declined year on year.

- 18. The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training (NI 148) improved from 54.5% to 58.3% in quarter 3, bringing it closer to both the national (62.1%) and statistical neighbour (60.8%) comparators for 2009/10. Comparator averages showed a marked decline year on year in 2009/10.



## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

19. 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**

20. The sustained high numbers of children looked after by the local authority continues to put increased pressure on the services providing support for children and their families. The department's plans to improve the quality of assessments and the subsequent referrals to appropriate support services by reviewing and strengthening its front of house arrangements have progressed well. A manager has been appointed and team members identified. An office base has been agreed and the installation of the required ICT infrastructure has been scheduled. It is anticipated that the team will become operational in March 2011, in line with the target start date.
21. There are now internal control structures in place, which means that decisions around accommodating children are made at an appropriate level within the organisation.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

22. There are no immediate implications arising from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

23. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advises the Executive to note the statistical update on children looked after by the local authority.

## **REASON**

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

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

25. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
- CFL's Safeguarding Performance Workbook for quarter 3 of 2010/11

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