

## **EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**

### **DECISIONS**

#### **1. Youth Services**

On 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the Executive considered and approved the future delivery of Youth Services, to be funded in part through £400,000 of savings achieved by a streamlining of the Council's senior management structures.

The new proposals will reinvigorate the town's youth provision, replacing the current range of short-term grant-funded projects with street-based youth work and targeted support.

The decision to develop a youth service in Middlesbrough aligns to the Children Service's Improvement Plan, the Early Help and Prevention Strategy and Participation Strategy. The new approach – expected to be up and running in early 2021, will aim to support young people through key transition points via youth work and positive activities.

Council resources from different directorate areas will be scoped into the 'Youth Offer'; this will provide additional benefits to young people and increase access to the town's parks, leisure, Public Health services and cultural facilities, with a corporate approach.

The key actions are now to develop a commissioned model for Youth Service Provision with a full procurement process to commence.

### **STRATEGIC**

#### **2. Ofsted Improvement Journey**

##### MACH

Middlesbrough's own Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH) went live on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. The process of disaggregation from the partnership with Redcar and Cleveland went smoothly and the last joint Strategic Board reflected on a closure report detailing the infrastructure of the MACH, the performance figures and the challenges it had faced.

##### Assessment and Safeguarding and Care Planning Services

The contract commissioning the two Innovate teams to support the Assessment Service and the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service (CSP) came to an end in June. The project was successful in that it provided valuable additional capacity during the pandemic but its ending was problematic for SCP. The Assessment Service support team worked to complete their allocated single assessments to end their involvement with families but the safeguarding and care planning service support team could not close down their work with all of the one hundred children in need allocated to them which was the original intention and the work with forty six children transferred back to SCP.

One of the teams has been recommissioned for a further six months as part of an 'invest to save' initiative outlined in my previous report. The team began their work on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and is working with one hundred children and young people either in external residential placements to assess if they can step down to foster placements preferably in the Middlesbrough area or return to live with family and friends where it is safe to do so, supporting children and young people in fragile placements and progressing the work with children needing to be settled, in permanent 'forever families'.

Since June, two auditors have been contracted to provide the "Audit to Excellence" programme. They have used audit findings to date, performance reports, Ofsted findings, dip sampling and feedback from teams to develop individual team profiles. This provides critical insight into the development needs, pockets of good practice, agents and blockers to change on an individual team basis.

It is important to note that there is a high volume of work across the social care teams and caseloads are significantly higher than preferred. This is most notable in SCP where caseloads for experienced social workers are around 30 children. The reasons for this include that the spike of work in the assessment service following the inspection has now transferred to SCP, there has been a lack of through put in SCP meaning that some children are not moving to their forever families in a timely way, the pieces of work mentioned above have transferred back into SCP and COVID related reasons such as the courts running at reduced capacity.

Determined action has been taken to avert a large number of unallocated children's cases including delaying work transferring from the assessment service, transferring work earlier into the Children Looked After Service including some children subject to care proceedings, cover for social workers on sick leave, redeploying resource workers and bringing in business support staff. When work was allocated consideration was given to the number of families allocated to a worker as this can reduce the number of visits needing to be made to family members.

#### Futures for Families –

The edge of care service will now go live on 24<sup>th</sup> August. Our partnership with North Yorkshire is growing; for example, we have successfully recruited to one of our two Practice Leader posts but the field was not strong enough to make another appointment. North Yorkshire is looking to provide us with additional capacity which give them another opportunity to support staff to recognise good social care practice. North Yorkshire will also take an independent view of our MACH shortly.

#### Leadership and Management

I am pleased to say that Rachel Farnham, our Head of Transformation has stepped into the role of interim Director of Children's Care and the permanent position is now out for advert. We have also recruited an interim Head of Service for Safeguarding and Care Planning, Ben Short. Ben is experienced in improvement work and took up his post on 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

We substituted the Operational board in July for a poll asking attendees what they feel about the way it is and what could be done better. The Corporate Reference Group is going through a similar process.

The Middlesbrough Centre for Practice Excellence Project continues to develop well and is on target. We have been working in the last month to develop the options appraisal for

the delivery of the Practice Academy element and have identified out first cohort of newly qualified Social Workers to enter the academy in September 2020. We have recruited to one of two practice leader posts and are excited to welcome Charlotte Davison into her role in September 2020. Colleagues from North Yorkshire are considering whether they can provide the expertise to support us with this work. We are working with colleagues in the digital team to develop the website options to deliver the virtual space we need.

### NEET

Following the impact of Covid, we have created a focussed campaign to address a potential rise in young people not in education employment or training (NEET). Schools and local providers will be part of the campaign and will provide case studies and promote links their own events that they would like to showcase. Leaflets will be produced to go to each school for distribution on GCSE results day; posters will be made available and distributed across the town; the bus station will display large posters and links to all colleges and local training providers will be shared with young people to ensure we engage with those who wouldn't necessarily take up a place at college. The campaign will run from the week commencing 17th August and continue through September.

### Governance and Partnership

The Improvement Plan has now been officially submitted to Ofsted. The date of our monitoring visit has been confirmed as 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September and it will be focusing on the front door and tracking casework into the assessment service. The lead inspector will be Jan Edwards who was also the lead inspector for the ILACS inspection last year. The disaggregation of the MACH is in itself the start of our preparations for this monitoring visit and planning the visit is well underway. It is likely that key partners will be contacted during the monitoring visit to share their views on how the partnership is progressing and the progress that is being made against the improvement plan

Work is taking place to strengthen Middlesborough's and Redcar and Cleveland's joint safeguarding arrangements. This is being drive by a senior action group representing the police, both local authorities and the CCG.

The Participation Strategy has now been signed off. We have two Children in Care Groups; The Care Leavers forum; the members of Youth Parliament and the Young Commissioners groups. During COVID, the workload of the groups has reduced in terms of directly impacting service delivery as they have not been able to meet and follow initial action plans. However these groups have been involved in the COVID recovery group, the Corporate Parenting Board and recruitment activities over the last 3 months. They are also an integral part of the development and rolling out of the #Middlesbrough Children Matter brand. This brand will support the direct impact on service delivery as we will be providing training and development opportunities for staff which are led by children and young people, young advisors and a clear mission, vision and purpose and children and young people will be the heart of this work.

Our Youth Advisory group developed the #Middlesbrough Children Matter logo. Various designs were submitted and two of them went out for consultation by Sli-do. The #Middlesbrough Children Matter vision, mission and purpose were for presented for sign off to the Communication and Participation board on 5<sup>th</sup> August and the logo can go live from 17<sup>th</sup> August. We are in the process of developing the #Middlesbrough Children Matter website and umbrella websites such as our participation website.

### **3. Integrated Commissioning Model**

The recommissioning of specialist services for supported housing, domestic abuse and substance misuse has been delayed due to COVID-19 and services will now be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The Homeless Advice and Prevention Service will transfer into MBC on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 as planned, allowing us time to embed the service before CGL and Humankind transfer in on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The deadline for tenders of specialist services is 27<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020, with submissions being evaluated in September 2020 and contracts awarded in October 2020.

The Digital Innovation Funding for the Shared Case Management System was confirmed in May 2020 and the system will go live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

Homeless and Children's Services has developed a number of new ways of working to improve working practices between the two areas to prevent homelessness amongst 16-17 years old's and achieve a set of co-ordinated services which set out a 'positive pathway'. These improvements include a joint protocol for 16-17 Yr. olds, a Young People's champion within the Housing Solutions Team (new name for homeless service), co-location within Children's Services, joint team meetings for children being assessed in MACH, Housing Solutions service to be located in the Customer Centre, a young person's panel which will act as a sole gateway into supported accommodation and family mediation.

In addition, the young person's supported accommodation has been redesigned and co-commissioned with Children's Services to include crash pad provision, to avoid the use of temporary accommodation for young people in crisis.

## **PERFORMANCE**

### **4. Pot Hole Initiative**

The responsive maintenance team are now into week 8 of a planned 20 week programme and have so far completed work in 5 wards; Acklam Ward, Ayresome Ward, Berwick Hills and Pallister Ward, Brambles and Thorntree Ward and are currently carrying out works in Coulby Newham Ward. Not including ongoing works in Coulby Newham, the team have so far identified and repaired 2618 defects, laid 254 tonnes of tarmac over an area of 3243 square metres and have programmed a further 5515 square metres of resurfacing works to be carried out by a main contractor to repair those areas too large to patch.

Work is progressing well with only minor delays to the programme so far due to a combination of inclement weather and the scale of works identified in 2 wards which extended the planned week per ward programme to ensure that actionable defects were repaired. Feedback from residents so far has been very positive.