

OSB Briefing - Tuesday 11th October

The Balanced Score Card for Safeguarding and Children's Care shows Middlesbrough continues to have a high number of LAC – Why is this?

Independent review -Key Finding	Risks to Middlesbrough	What are we doing about it?
Demand in Middlesbrough has remained higher than national, regional and statistical neighbour comparisons since 2011/12. Whilst Children in Needs rates are falling, the rate of Children subject to a Child Protection plan remains stubbornly high. Rates and numbers of Children Looked After continue to rise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued pressure on reducing budgets. • Increased pressure on case load management. • Risk of poorer outcomes for children if the above points aren't addressed. • Higher volumes of cases make prioritisation more difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in our 'front door' to ensure the needs of more children and families are met by a wider range of partners and the demand on the local authority is reduced
Middlesbrough displays a risk averse approach to assessment rather than having the confidence to signpost at this earlier stage to Early Help. A large proportion of contacts are taken to assessment which are later closed with no further action. Middlesbrough takes longer to complete assessments than other authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds delay into the system for families receiving appropriate intervention. • Risk of cases escalating while they are waiting for assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an asset based social work model, increase redirection to early help. • We will use the model to (appropriately) expand the approach to risk within statutory social work delivery, reducing the numbers of open cases.
Care plans are routinely being completed before an assessment has concluded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of generating significant levels of unnecessary work and delay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice change to reduce unnecessary work
Some managers spoke of the "Middlesbrough factor", whereby the disadvantage in Middlesbrough becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This leads to a lower aspiration for families and a greater acceptance that more families in Middlesbrough will require social care intervention, keeping numbers high, rather than challenging and supporting families to build on their assets and support themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing high demand due to lack of aspiration for families. • Ongoing culture of dependency. • Continued high levels of recorded demand leading to a higher level of scrutiny from Ofsted and impacts on the reputation of Middlesbrough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in culture change within Safeguarding and children's care to embed the asset based social work model
Early Help is not yet impacting sufficiently upon reducing demand. There is a lack of confidence amongst partners to co-ordinate Early Help activity, such that needs only get addressed when they require social care intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued high demand for acute services if Early Help is not able to address families' needs at a more preventative level. • Continued culture of dependency amongst families and partners on acute services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure asset based model is promoted and used across the whole of Middleborough Councils offer to children and families , thus increasing confidence in early help and reducing dependency on statutory social work

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued dependency on the Council to support the majority of Early Help cases. 	
<p>Resources are not sufficiently aligned to priorities such as reducing demand. The ratio of children placed with In House Foster Carers to those placed in Independent Fostering Agencies is too low, and current strategies to address this are not having sufficient impact in rebalancing this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand, and costs associated with it, continues to be high. Placements are not allocated in the most cost-efficient way. Risk that increasing numbers of children are placed outside the borough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in foster carer recruitment Commercialising our approach to procurement of residential placements through a regional framework Increasing our ability to respond to emergency placements in house
<p>Commissioning and Community Cohesion Strategies are strong. Commissioning is promoting capacity-building within the voluntary and community sector which should reduce the need for the Council to be the main provider of services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Messages of self-help and a community asset-based approach are not embedded within Children's Services. Children's Services and Early Help Partners are not making full use of externally commissioned and community-based services, indicated by continuing high demand for acute Council-based services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigating opportunities for externally commissioned and community-based services.