Middlesbrough
moving forward

Legal and Governance

YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Date: **Thursday, 10 July 2025**
Time: **5.00 p.m.**
Venue: **Mandela Room, Town Hall**

AGENDA

1.	Welcome and Fire Evacuation Procedure In the event the fire alarm sounds attendees will be advised to evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit and assemble at the Bottle of Notes opposite MIMA.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Minutes - You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board - 13 March 2025	3 - 8
5.	Minutes - You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board - 3 April 2025	9 - 14
6.	Cared For and Care Experience Engagement April - June 2025	15 - 20
7.	You Matter to Us - Performance	21 - 32
8.	Children in Care Update	33 - 36
9.	Care Leavers Offer A presentation will be delivered at the meeting.	
10.	Private Fostering Annual Report	37 - 44
11.	Virtual School - Annual Reports 2022/2023 and 2023/2024	45 - 152
12.	Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	153 - 160
13.	Any other urgent items which, in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.	

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Wednesday, 2 July 2025

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors L Henman (Chair), Z Uddin (Vice-Chair), E Clynch, D Jackson, D McCabe and J McTigue

Ex-Officio Members: Councillors P Storey and L Young

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Chris Lunn, 01642 729742, chris_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk

YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday, 13 March 2025.

Present: Mayor C Cooke (Chair) and Councillors D Jackson and L Young.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: A Hart - Care Ambassador
K Shah - Dental Public Health Consultant, NHS England.

Officers: D Alaszewski, V Banks, G Field, L Grabham, T Jelfs, C Lunn, K Peacock and K Smith.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors P Storey and Z Uddin.

24/19 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

24/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

24/21 **MINUTES - YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 30 JANUARY 2025**

The minutes of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 30 January 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

****SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 4.13.2 - ORDER OF BUSINESS****

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 4.57, the Board agreed to vary the order of business to deal with the items in the following order: 6, 5, 7 and 8.

24/22 **CARE EXPERIENCED YOUTH UPDATE**

The Voice and Influence Manager and a Care Ambassador provided a Care Experienced Youth Voice update to the Board.

As a preliminary, the Board was advised that two of the Care Ambassadors had recently stepped down from the role after an 18-month period. The Chair wished to express his gratitude to them both and requested that a note of thanks be recorded in the minutes.

The following matters were raised as part of the update:

- The Care Ambassadors had met with Pathways and were developing an engagement and events plan for 2025. They would all meet once a month to review progress.
- The Care Ambassadors had met with the Head of Corporate Parenting and Fostering to discuss progress and would continue to meet every six weeks - to include other key decision makers.
- The Care Ambassadors would be asked to support several events during Social Work Week.
- The 'We Matter' group - Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council (CiCC) - had received a visit from the Fostering Service Manager, who had sought views around the fostering feedback forms that cared for young people were given. This work currently continued.
- Two members of the 'We Matter' group who would be attending the Regional CiCC residential in April, had attended a regional meeting hosted by Sunderland. All the cared for and care experienced young people present were asked their views on what should be discussed at this year's regional CiCC conference. Views were sought on digital inclusion and they were provided with information pertaining to the residential.

The Care Ambassador would also be attending the residential.

- The 'We Matter' group worked with the fostering service to host an event at Jump 360. Two members attended and supported 16 young people to have a voice. The fostering team asked those who fostered about their experiences, and the fostered young people were asked questions about who they approached for support, how they shared their views in their cared for meeting, and what they thought about using an app to share their views.
- The Voice, Influence and Change Group met on the first Wednesday of every month. Numbers were still low and Pathways were working hard to encourage attendance from their young adults. Pathways would identify two champions in the team to promote participation and events; one member of Pathways would attend the group meetings.
- The Voice, Influence and Change Group would be holding a social event on 26 March 2025 for the young adults to come together for food and fun.
- Over the next few months, the Care Ambassadors hoped that a decision would be made regarding the opportunities and incentives that should be made available to care experienced young adults, including Apprenticeships and Volunteering.
- The Change the Language initiative would go live mid-March 2025.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The Mayor referred to proposals regarding the Middlesbrough Priorities Fund and corporate parenting. It was hoped that the matter would be resolved within the next two months.
- The Director of Children's Care advised that a work programme for the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board would be devised in due course. It was requested that increased consultation with the Care Ambassadors be undertaken during the development of the programme.

The Chair thanked the Voice and Influence Manager and the Care Ambassador for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

NOTED

24/23 **CHILDREN IN CARE UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Kamini Shah, Consultant in Dental Public Health, NHS England for North East and Yorkshire, to the meeting, who delivered a presentation to the Board.

The presentation focused on the following topics:

- Service Evaluation of a Tees Valley Dental Access Referral Pathway for Safeguarding Clinicians Assessing Children in Care; and
- Dental Attendance for Children in Care: Facilitators and Barriers.

As part of the presentation, Members were appraised of several matters, including:

- The requirement for every child in care to receive an annual dental check-up. It was explained that having monitored this, Local Authorities had identified problems with provision. Statistics in respect of 2021/22 were provided as follows:

Local Authority	Percentage of Children in Care not receiving an annual dental check (21/22)	Numbers of Children in Care not receiving an annual dental check (21/22)	Eligible Cohort
Stockton	57%	253	445
Hartlepool	29%	73	254
Redcar and Cleveland	12%	27	231
Middlesbrough	19%	70	370
Darlington	11%	21	190
Tees Average	25%	444	1490

- The aims of the Tees Valley Safeguarding Referral Pilot.
- The Tees Valley Dental Access Care Pathway for children having child protection medicals and 'children in our care' health assessments (Initial and Review Health Assessments).
- Audit referral data for the period January - July 2023.
- Quotations from various professionals, including Community and Consultant Paediatricians and Children in Care Nurses, on the importance and rationale for commissioning a dental access referral pathway, and the impact of it on general dental access, referrers and families.
- Conclusions from the pilot, which included: the identification of significantly unmet dental needs; that the dental access referral pathway had addressed a gap in services for safeguarding clinicians to refer children requiring general dental care; that there was variability in referral rates and patterns, which could be optimised with further updates to clinical referral teams; and recognition of a need for mechanisms for post-referral follow-up to be more robustly implemented.
- Facilitators and barriers around dental attendance for Children in Care in Stockton-on-Tees were highlighted, which included the positive impact that seeing the same dentist, and having matters explained to them, could have on attendance. Other carer-reported facilitators to improve access included: oral health passport; referral to a named dental practice; and convenient appointment times, i.e. after work or school. Barriers included: school commitments; difficulties obtaining time off work; the child being refused; and child behaviour concerns.
- In terms of Stockton-on-Tees, Children in Care had good access to and positive experiences of dental care, and the implementation of a dental access referral pathway may have contributed to increased attendance rates.
- Recommendations arising from the pilot, for the attention of the North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) and to Local Authorities, were highlighted. Regarding the NENC ICB, these concerned:

    - The continued commissioning of dental practices to provide facilitated services, and to provide ongoing updated lists of these to clinical teams.
    - The consideration of extending the referral pathway to other NENC areas and safeguarding professionals.
    - Further work/evaluation to explore the views of families and Children in Care about the impact of the dental access referral pathway.

    In terms of the Local Authorities, promotion was key. This included promotion of the dental access referral pathway with social work teams and independent review officers; and promotion of the use of the dental access referral pathway with their commissioned 0-19 service. Consideration of the introduction of an oral health passport to share oral health information between carers and health professionals had also been recommended.

    To ensure dissemination/availability of appropriate information, recommendations had been made around the following:

    - Information on dental charge exemptions should be provided to children and young people over the age of 16 and still in the care system, and they should be encouraged to get dentally fit prior to the charges coming into effect.
    - Information should be made available to carers about the availability of referral-based specialist paediatric services that may be more suitable to provide care for extremely anxious children.

The Director of Children's Care thanked the Consultant for the work undertaken in respect of the pilot and commented that it had made a significant difference. In response to a subsequent enquiry as to the extension of the pilot scheme, the Consultant indicated that the pilot had been extended on the back of the dental access initiative for the duration of the next financial year. It was explained that, because the future of the scheme beyond that time was currently unknown, contingency arrangements would be established to ensure that the pathway and progress made would result in something sustainable going forward.

The Director of Children's Care referred to the barrier concerning appointments during school hours and queried whether there was opportunity to offer more appointments outside of school hours. In response, the Consultant advised that this had been difficult to address, but

further consideration would be given.

The Director of Children's Care referred to dental charge exemptions and queried whether there was scope to provide free dental checks for Children in Care up to age 25. In response, the Consultant advised that this was a national payment system and therefore neither Integrated Care Boards nor NHS England could change this. If, however, resources were available locally to offer this, it could perhaps be considered. The Chair felt that the cost implications associated with this could be looked into, potentially to offer provision up to the ages of either 21 or 25.

A Member referred to schools and the work taking place to offer advice to providers that would support children/families without access to dental health services. In response, Members were appraised of a historical 'Adopt a School' scheme that linked schools and practices together. It was also explained that if school staff identified children experiencing dental pain, who did not have access to a dentist, an urgent care service was available via 111 and appointment slots. A short discussion ensued in relation to Urgent Access Dental Centres (UADCs) and urgent appointment allocations. It was indicated that there were plans for two further UADCs within the patch, with scoping work for potential localities currently taking place.

The Chair thanked the Consultant for her attendance and contributions to the meeting.

The Head of Corporate Parenting and Fostering presented a report, the purpose of which was to inform the Board of the current numbers and brief circumstances of children in the Council's care, and the actions being taken to improve the experience and outcomes for children in the Council's care.

The following matters were highlighted:

- Of the children currently in the Council's care, 345 were supported by the Children Looked After teams. 21 were supported by Social Workers in the Children with Disability Service; 147 children and young people were subject to permanence planning within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service; and three children were cared for and open to the Assessment teams.
- Work currently taking place by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service, in relation to supporting applicable children, included reviewing care plans and working with the courts.
- Reunification processes, including the impact/delays associated with DBS checks.
- Timescales around Care Order discharges (around 16 weeks) and the number of orders/related applications currently being processed.
- The permanency of staff within the Corporate Parenting Service workforce.
- Approval for a Modernising Fostering transformation project had been granted in February 2025. The project covered a variety of tasks, including the creation of a Kinship Team, which would provide support to carers when Orders, such as Special Guardianship Orders or Child Arrangement Orders, had been granted. The service would also implement a review process to check that Support Plans continued to meet need, or that amendments could be made, as required, to reflect changes within the family. The Team Manager had been recruited for this team; Social Workers were currently being recruited.
- With regards to foster carers, work on recruitment and appropriate support provision continued.
- Regarding 16 and 17 year olds, the Council currently had 111 young people. 14% (16) were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and 60% (67) were in Employment, Education or Training (EET). 28 children had no defined outcome and data was being worked on within the teams to resolve some recording issues.
- There were 249 care experienced young people who were open to the Pathways Service. 71 were aged between 21 and 25, with 176 aged between 18 and 21. 47% (118) care experienced young people were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), 51% (127) were in Employment, Education or Training (EET). Four young people showed as having no defined outcome; data was being worked on within the teams to resolve some recording issues.
- The Pathways Service had continued to develop following the focused visit by Ofsted in July 2024. To assist with forward planning, work continued with Housing and

Health to advise needs as soon as they were known. A Care Leavers Hub was being established to replace pop-up drop ins.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Member suggested that the Director of Regeneration be invited to the 3 April 2025 You Matter to Us meeting to provide an update regarding the Care Leavers' Hub and a timeline for completion.
- The Chair commented on the importance of the projects, such as those around reunification and kinship, that were taking place. The Director of Children's Care advised that further details had been provided at a recent Transformation Board meeting, which had focused on the outcomes that the projects aimed to achieve. Further details could be circulated to Members, if requested.
- The Chair referred to the Kinship Team and the support offered to carers in terms of preparing for the role and queried whether any example preparatory documents were available that could be shared. This would be looked into.
- Members thanked the Director of Children's Care for the work that had been undertaken in relation to HR and creating more permanent roles within Children's Services. It was acknowledged that work was on-going, but work carried out to date had been successful.

The Chair thanked the Head of Corporate Parenting and Fostering for the information provided.

AGREED that:

1. **Regarding the possibility of increasing dental provision for those in care (currently capped at age 18) to either age 21 or 25, the potential costs of this would be looked into.**
2. **The Director of Regeneration would be invited to the next scheduled You Matter to Us meeting (3 April 2025) to provide an update on the Care Leavers' Hub and the timeline for completion.**
3. **Regarding Kinship Care and the work that was carried out to prepare carers for undertaking this role, case study documentation detailing processes/procedures would be circulated, as appropriate.**
4. **The information, as provided, was noted.**

24/24 **YOU MATTER TO US - PERFORMANCE**

The Director of Children's Care provided information to the Board in relation to service performance. Members were referred to the 'Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT)' document, which was based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report, and which had been circulated as part of the agenda pack.

The snapshot data for the last six months covered the following areas:

- Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last six months.
- CLA with an open episode of care.
- CLA Placements.
- CLA Health and Missing / Absent from Placement.
- Care Leavers Eligibility, PA Allocation and Pathway Plans.
- Care Leavers Demographics and UASC.
- Care Leavers Pathway Plan and Contact Timescales.
- Care Leavers PA Allocation and In Touch.
- Care Leavers Accommodation Suitability and Type.
- Care Leavers Activity (Education, Employment, or Training).

Members heard that there were 508 children currently in care which, statistically, was of a similar level to neighbouring local authorities. It was indicated that preventative work was a key driver in reducing the number of children entering care. Increased work in the gateway system; the implementation of family hubs; and work with SHiFT were some of the initiatives being undertaken.

In response to an enquiry from a Member regarding the number of CLA started and ceased in the last six months, the Board was advised that there had been a reduction in those numbers. There were several potential reasons behind this - work was currently taking place to insert additional categories within the dataset to help identify these.

In terms of pathway plans, it was explained that the Pathways team had been undertaking work with colleagues in Islington to further develop service provision. A short discussion ensued in relation to the model adopted by Islington and the barriers that faced Middlesbrough. Consideration was given to staff training and turnover. The importance of performance, quality and consistency in planning performance was highlighted.

Regarding missing incidents and return home interviews, it was indicated that all CLA with a missing incident (72 of 580 within the last 12 months) had been offered a return to home interview. 68% of these had been accepted. A weekly report of the respective statistics was generated.

The Chair thanked the Director of Children's Care for the report.

NOTED

24/25 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

None.

YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday, 3 April 2025.

PRESENT: Mayor C Cooke (Chair), L Henman, D Jackson, P Storey and Z Uddin.

OFFICERS: D Alaszewski, C Cannon, K Dargue, T Dunn, G Field, A Hart, R Horniman, T Jelfs, C McGarry, J McNally, G Nicholson, C O'Connor, K Peacock and J Tynan.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors I Blades, E Clynch, L Mason, M Nugent and L Young.

24/26 **WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions were made and the Fire Evacuation Procedure explained.

24/27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

24/28 **CARE EXPERIENCED YOUTH UPDATE**

Members were provided with a Care Experienced Youth Voice update. A report was presented to update the Members on activity during the period February-March 2025.

Members were advised that the two care experienced young adults who had been Care Ambassadors for nearly two years had ended their involvement, to allow two more care experienced young adults to have this opportunity. It was advised that the closing date for applications was 4 April 2025.

Members heard that six young people currently attend "We Matter" (Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council) however this number could vary they currently meet fortnightly at Easterside Hub.

It was advised that the Voice Influence and Change Group had been postponed enabling the group to consider what it would look like in the future. However the first social event had been planned for 9 April 2025.

Members were advised that planned action over the coming months included:

- Care Leavers week 27-31 October 2025 – To include Scream Factory and a celebration event
- Easter activity events - 16th April 2025
- Regional CiCC residential -25-27 April 2025
- May activity event - 27th May 2025
- Football event -25th July (to include with older care experienced young people)
- Picnic in the Park - 5th August 2025
- Halloween party - 30th October 2025
- Christmas Party - 10th December 2025

A Care Ambassador questioned if the You Matter to Us Board were any closer to themes and suggested looking at pledges again however it was stated that momentum for pledges would need to be kept and the pledges needed to be timely, achievable, measurable and realistic.

A discussion took place, and it was agreed that themes should be planned across the year with a timetable. The Director of Children's Care advised that there were themes within the Participation Strategy. It was agreed that informal sessions should be arranged to look at an individual theme with feedback being brought back to the You Matter to Us Board. The Mayor requested that a spreadsheet be developed detailing what the Council was doing to support the elements of the Participation Strategy.

Agreed as follows:

1. **that the information provided be noted.**
2. **yearly timetable for themes to be developed.**
3. **informal sessions to be arranged to look at individual themes.**
4. **spreadsheet to be developed detailing support provided by the council to support the Participation Strategy.**

24/29 **YOU MATTER TO US - PERFORMANCE**

The Director of Children's Care presented the latest You Matter to Us Performance Data. The information provided had been compiled using the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) based on Ofsted's inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS) Annex A dataset (2020)/inspection report.

The following area's were highlighted:

- Number of children in care had reduced
- Reduction in the number of children coming into care had reduced
- 77 children looked after ceased
- Slight increase in adoptions and special guardianships
- Increase in keeping in touch
- Increase in accommodation suitability
- Increase in access to employment and training.

The Director of Children's Care advised that there had been a shift in the types of cases and supportive orders with a preventative approach were being used rather than care orders when possible.

Members heard that there were 30 cases that were being provided with the right support to prevent entering into S1 proceedings it was advised that it was only when absolutely necessary that cases entered into court proceedings. Very positive feedback had been provided by the courts.

Members were informed of the success of the Reunification Project that was funded through DfE the aim of the project was to return children to their families were it was safe to do so or to guardianships. Members heard that 86 children had been returned to their families, 15 children discharged with a different order, 19 had been returned to their parents with a discharge of orders and 22 children had been placed with a long-term match. The project enabled the team of 4 workers to speak with parents/guardians to ensure the right actions were put in place earlier it had also provided an increase in support groups for kinship carers.

A discussion took place regarding accommodation for care leavers it was advised that a protocol for housing had been developed to ensure housing was appropriate. Members felt that there were not enough housing providers and that commissioning for this service needed to be looked at. It was advised that the number of care leavers moving into private settings had increased, a Member queried if risk assessments were carried out before a young person moved it was advised that risk assessments were carried out on an individual basis.

Members agreed that housing should be a theme going forward and that a whole session be held to look at this, it was agreed that Louise Grabham attends the session.

AGREED, as follows:

1. **That the information provided was received and noted.**
2. **Whole session on housing be arranged with Louise Grabham in attendance.**

24/30 **ADOPTION TEES VALLEY - BI-ANNUAL REPORT**

This item was deferred to a future meeting of the You Matter to Us Corporate Parenting Board.

24/31 **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of Quality, Learning and Review was in attendance to present the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report.

Members were advised that the IRO Team comprised of 14 FTE Independent Reviewing Officers, overseen by 2 Team Managers. The team had a wealth of skills and expertise from experience within Safeguarding and Care Planning, Cared for children, Early Help, substance misuse, exploitation, and Children with Disabilities.

The range of skills within the team were complementary and foster a culture of learning and development. The team also had a dedicated IRO who undertook foster Care Reviews. The team had remained stable, with most of the IROs having been in post for over 5 years. All IROs were permanent members of staff. The position of the team in the Children's Directorate structure had remained the same throughout 2021/22 to currently.

The team had direct access to the Director of Children's Social Care and were able to meet on a regular basis to share their insight into the challenges and improvements in practice and plans for our children and young people.

To provide assurance, the IRO team reported progress to the Director of Children's Social Care at Monthly Performance meetings.

The team also contributed to a range of panels which provided senior management oversight of planning for children and young people.

These included: -

- Legal Gateway Panel
- Permanency Monitoring Group
- Child Protection Review Panel

The IRO's maintained their focus on the children and families of Middlesbrough and were committed to making a difference for them. As Middlesbrough's improvement journey had seen improvements in planning for children and young people, the caseloads of IRO's had fallen by 42% between 2021/22 and 2023/24.

The Head of Quality, Learning and Review advised the Board that there had been a major change to the Child Protection Panel, previously Middlesbrough was signed up to the Teeswide Procedure which meant that IRO's sitting on the panel from other local authorities did not have the authority to escalate or challenge a process when a plan was not working however this procedure had now changed.

A Care Ambassador stated that it was positive for a young person to have the same IRO and thanked the IRO team for their hard work.

AGREED that the information provided be received and noted.

24/32 **MISSING FROM CARE - POLICE/INTERNAL - SIX-MONTHLY UPDATE**

The Head of Partnerships and the Risk and Resilience Manager provided an update to Board Members on Children Missing from Home or Care.

It was advised that a missing child was defined as anyone whose whereabouts could not be established and where the circumstances were out of character, or the context suggested the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Members were advised that the Children's Society through its research had identified some of the following risk factors in the lead up to a child going missing:

- Arguments and conflicts
- Poor family relationships
- Physical and emotional abuse
- Peer Pressure

- Placed out of the area
- Exploitation

The Head of Partnerships stated that from August 2024 to February 2025 Middlesbrough had 641 missing episodes for 295 children. In February 2025 there were 45 missing from home episodes which involved 19 cared for children, 100% of children were offered a Return to Home interview with 73% completing the interview. It was advised that the Return to Home Interview which was offered to all children who go missing from home or care within 72 hours of their return was a statutory requirement. Of the 45 children who went missing, 7 had gone missing on 3 or more occasions in the month, 6 of these children had been referred or were already known to Harm outside the Home arrangements and had significant professional involvement and robust plans are in place.

Members were advised that as a minimum standard, the following missing cases had to be subject of multi-agency information sharing and problem solving:

- All children who had been missing 3 or more times in a 30-day period
- Any child who has had a missing episode categorised as high risk
- Any child where the return to home interview identifies the child has been or is vulnerable to child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation or being trafficked.
- Any child missing from home for 72 hours

Members heard that the Missing from Home Team sat within Children's Services within the Risk and Resilience Team in the Education and Partnerships Directorate. The team consisted of 1 Missing from Home Co-ordinator and 2 Missing from Home Practitioners. The role of the team was to work with children who have had a missing from home or care episode. Children could be signposted to partner agencies as part of engagement work or partners can form part of a multi-agency plan to support the child.

Members were advised that a joint audit with the police was being undertaken on missing children and that additional information including missing episodes – school type, missing episodes – placement type were being included in future analysis.

The Chair requested that a summary of the joint audits be provided to the next meeting of the You Matter to Us Board.

Agreed that:

1. **The information presented be noted.**
2. **A summary of the joint audit with the police be presented to the next You Matter to Us Board meeting.**

24/33 **CARE LEAVERS' HUB - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Director of Regeneration was in attendance and provided a verbal update to the Board on the Care Leavers Hub which would be based in the Collaboration Zone of Fountain Court.

The Board were advised that the Care Leavers Hub would be operational the first week of June 2025. There were two options available for the Hub either use of the full space or a partition wall could be installed to accommodate additional children's services.

One of the Care Ambassadors questioned if an oven would be made available for young people to use it was advised that there was currently an oven in the space but no washing machine however one would be installed. It was also queried if there had been involvement with the design from young people the Director of Regeneration stated that the space would be handed over to Children's Services as it however everything currently in the space apart from the kitchen was not fixed and could be moved to suit. It was also advised that two of the current toilets would be replaced with showers.

Members all felt that it would be a good space for young people, and it would have a positive impact.

Agreed that:

1. **The verbal update was noted.**
2. **The Director of Regeneration to share the plans via email and consult with young people.**

24/34 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Report of:	**Kathy Peacock – Voice and Influence Manager**

Submitted to:	**You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board- 10th July 2025**

Subject:	**Care For and Care Experience Engagement April-June 2025**

Contribution to the guiding principles of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
Your Home
Your Family and Friends
Your Education
Your Adult Life
Your Health and wellbeing
Your Voice and Influence

Is the report confidential or does it contain exempt information?

Yes – The report contains photographs of young people and should not be shared outside of the CPB (copies of this version will be tabled for Members' perusal). The report with no photographs has been circulated with the public agenda pack.

What is the purpose of this report?

To update the Corporate Parents on what care experienced young people have achieved and their plan for the next few months. To have the Corporate Parent's discuss their involvement with the groups/activities to further support the work.

Report Background
N/A

Appendices

Report attached

Recommendations
N/A

Why is this being recommended?
N/A

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended
N/A

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)
N/A

Legal
N/A

Financial
N/A

Policy Framework
N/A

Equality and Diversity
N/A

Risk
N/A

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)
N/A

Background papers
No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Contact: Kathy Peacock

Email: Kathy_peacock@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Cared For and Care Experience Engagement
April - June 2025

Middlesbrough Council facilitates open, safe, inclusive spaces and opportunities for people to tell us what is important to them. We capture this information and support them to tell key decision makers, so improvements are made to the support they and others receive.

We support our cared for and care experienced young people/adults to be engaged in a variety of different ways.

Volunteer Voice and Change Ambassadors (Previously known as Care Ambassadors)

- Two care experienced young adults are co opted onto the 'You Matter to Us' Corporate Parenting Board. In addition to being part of the Board they have opportunities to volunteer during our engagement events with cared for and care experienced young people and support the wider engagement work - working with students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, the Youth Council and Parent/Carer engagement as part of the Family Hubs.
- In April 2025, Jade Brown a cared for young person was successful in getting the volunteer role. Recently she has asked to step away from her role, so we will look for another volunteer to cover the work in the interim.
- Caitlin applied again and was given the role until March 2026.
- Jade and Caitlin decided to change their volunteering role title to Voice and Change Ambassadors.
- Adam Hart continues to volunteer.

'We Matter' (Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council)

- Care experienced young people aged 11 - 16 years meet fortnightly at Easterside Hub 17:00 - 18:30pm.
- Members include six young people.
- They have fun, have a voice and create events to hear from their care experienced peers
- They share their views with key decision makers who act on what they say and positively change services to meet their needs.

The groups are supported by:-
Kathy Peacock - Voice and Influence Manager
Caitlin O'Connor - Voice and Change volunteer
Jade Brown - Voice and Change Volunteer
Adam Hart - Care experienced volunteer
.....And members of the teams

For more information contact the Voice and Influence Manager Kathy_peacock@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Engagement Activities

'We Matter'

- **Regional Children In Care Council Annual Residential.** Fran, Jade and Harriett attended. We went gorge walking, did the high swing, played hide and seek and worked on what they wanted for the Regional Conference.

- We Matter invited cared for young people and their families to have tea with them at pizza hut. They talked about their group and asked if anyone wanted to join their group.

- Jump 360 - We Matter arranged for other cared for young people and their families to join them and have fun. 15 young people came along.

'Voice and Change' Ambassadors

- Level X on the 9th April- Purpose, to invite those supported by Pathways to come together, have fun and hear about getting involved in other opportunities Seven older care experienced young adults came along, did Bowling, Go Carts and some played air hockey. Afterwards most then had tea at Pizza Hut. Sean expressed an interest in getting involved.
- Jade and Caitlin attended the Virtual school annual conference. They heard some inspirational messages from the Key note speakers.
- Jade and Caitlin worked with Priory wood 16+ students to help them design and be part of the 'My Voice Matters' Conference. They helped run the event , supporting 60 students from eight educational settings to have fun, hear inspirational messages and have a voice.
- Jade and Caitlin supported the development of the 'Support Me' film - SUPPORT ME - FINAL!.mp4 and this was shown at the event.
- Children's Homes Awards - Jade and Caitlin have supported the residential service in developing the celebrations, judged the award categories and will announce the winners at the celebration event on 2nd July.
- Jade and Caitlin have been involved in meetings with Patrick (Paddy) Woods - Service Manager Stronger Families and created a survey to go out to young people across Middlesbrough about what they would want from the Middlesbrough Youth Offer.
- They are working with the Pathways team to support eight care experienced adults to create a music video and start a choir. Work on the video will hopefully start in July.
- Caitlin and Adam will attend the 'Raising Aspirations for young people in care' conference on the 1st July, organised by Teesside university. They are part of the Question and Answer session in the afternoon.
- Caitlin, Adam and a member of the Youth Council - Cole, will interview candidates for the Executive Director of Children's Service post.

Current Plans for 2025

A schedule of fun and engagement activities for cared for and older care experienced young people/adults has been created for 2025 early 2026 **-** Engagement **t**hemes for the year · Safe and stable homes, Opportunities to succeed, Support to be healthy and happy, A strong sense of identity and connection, Direct input into their plans and the Development of services for them.

We are hopeful that the new Hub will be available soon, so we can regular meet with our young people/adults, get them engaged and have fun.

We have written a survey to be completed by Pathways young people to tell us the issues that are important to them and asking how they would like to get involved. We will share some of the findings from the survey at this meeting.

We would like to propose that our Corporate parents have an informal engagement activity with us on:-

- **25th September - 5- 7pm** Fountains Court - Direct input into their plans and the Development of services for them.

- **27th November - 5- 7pm** Fountains Court - Safe and stable homes, Opportunities to succeed.

- **19th February - 5- 7pm** Fountains Court - Support to be healthy and happy, A strong sense of identity and connection.

Key dates for your diaries

- **25th July- 11-2pm -** MFC Herlingshaw centre **-** Football event for cared for and care experienced young people/adults

- **29th October** - Halloween party 4-6pm - My Place

- **November 2025** - Care experienced month. We will work with cared for and care experienced young people/adults to plan activities during this month

- **10th December** - We Matter Christmas party 5-7pm - Teesside university

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Data to Insight is the sector-led service for local authority children's data professionals, working with support from the ADCS, DLUHC, DfE and Ofsted to help make better use of data.

Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report

Middlesbrough

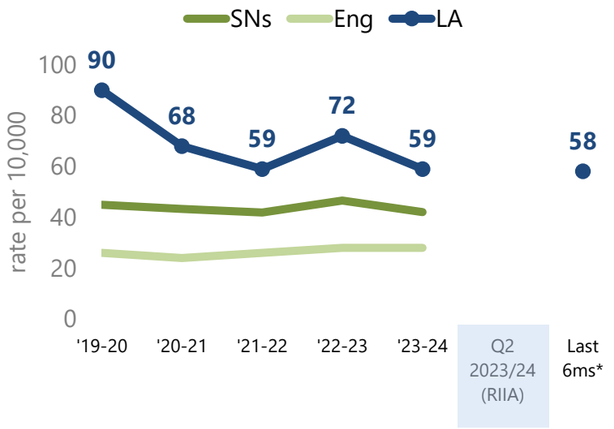
30 June 2025

Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

from 31/12/2024
to 30/06/2025

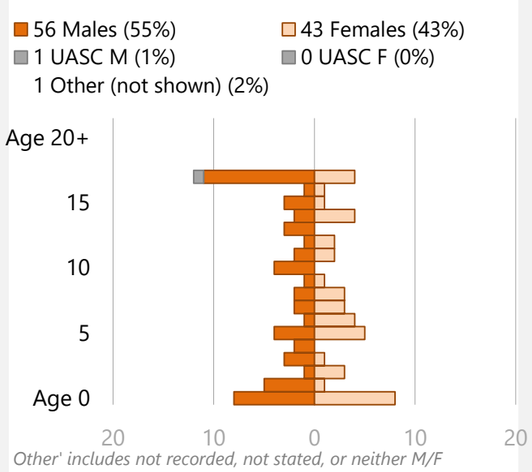
101 CLA started in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and sex

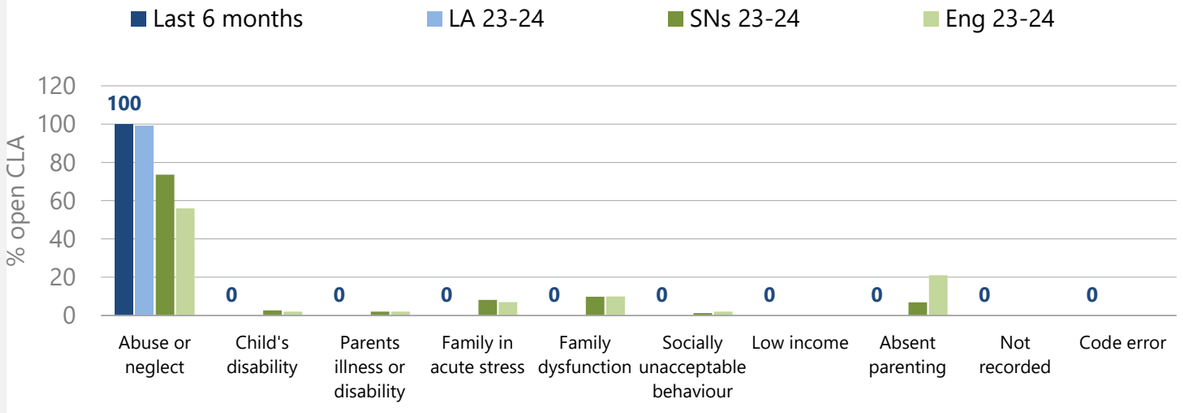


Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

1% were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

3% starters have previously been looked after

Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



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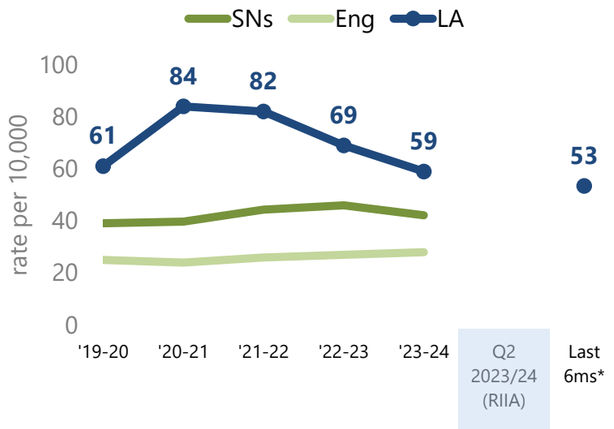
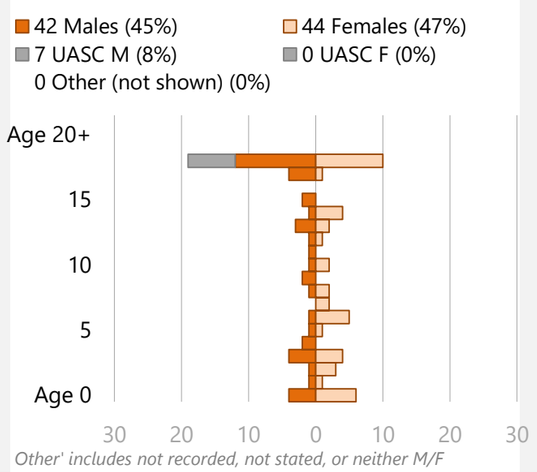
93 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and sex



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Reason episode of care ceased

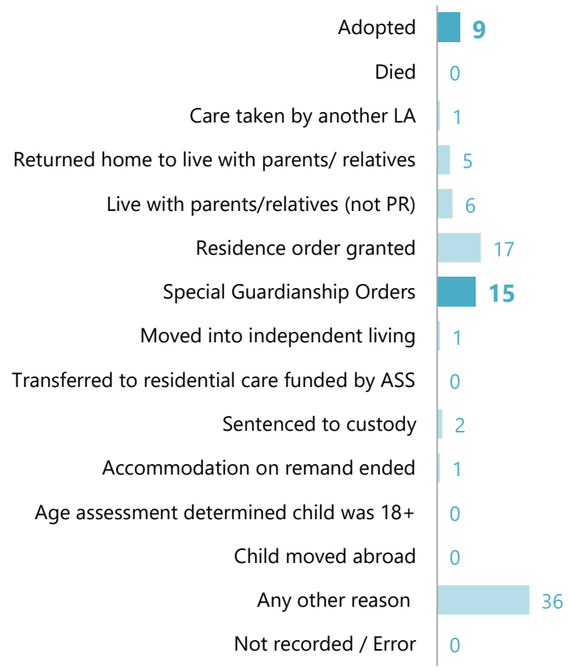
Adopted

Last 6 months 10%	2023-24 (published)		
	LA	SNs	Eng
	11%	14%	9%

Special Guardianship Order

Last 6 months 16%	2023-24 (published)		
	LA	SNs	Eng
	23%	18%	11%

Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period

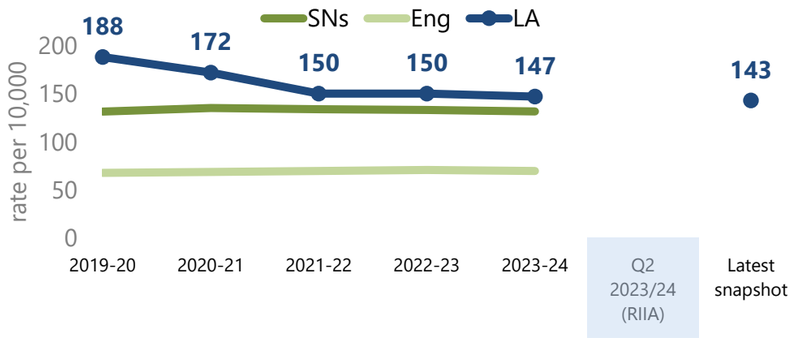


Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Snapshot 30/06/2025

498 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Rate of CLA per 10,000 children (snapshot)



Ethnic background

	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	83%	85%	0%
Mixed	8%	8%	8%
Asian or Asian British	3%	3%	0%
Black or black British	3%	3%	25%
Other ethnic group	3%	1%	67%
Not stated	0%	0%	0%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

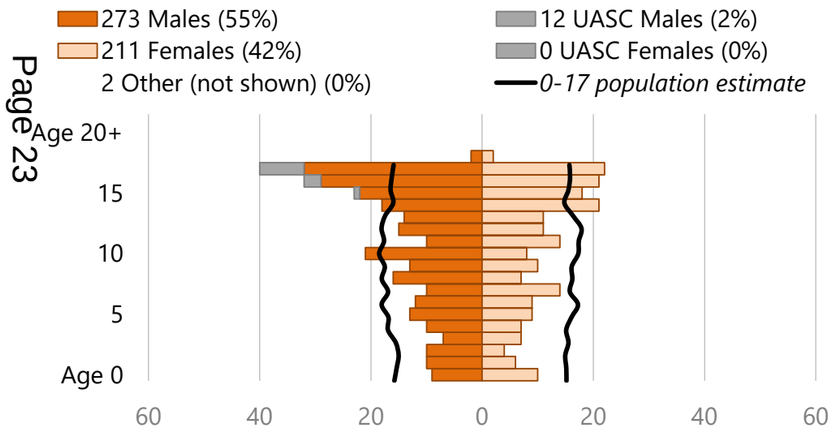
#REF!

43 children (9%) with a disability

Permanence plan

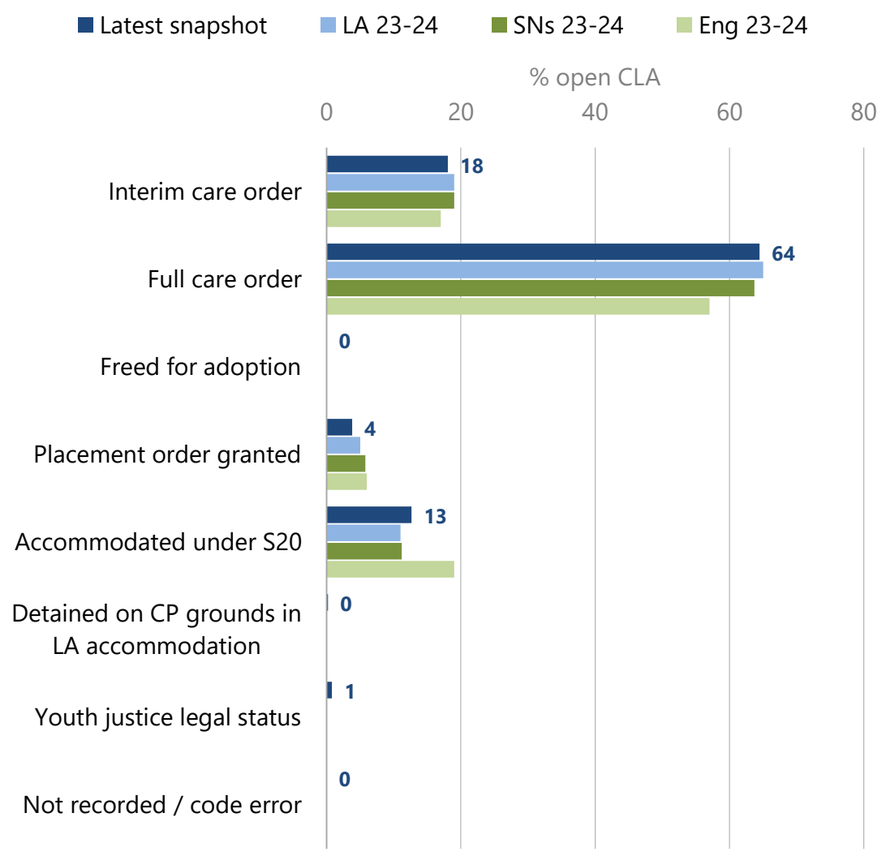
	Number	%
Return to family	84	17%
Adoption	25	5%
SGO/CAO	45	9%
Supported living	28	6%
L/T residential	42	8%
L/T fostering	199	40%
Other	60	12%
Not recorded	15	3%

Age and sex

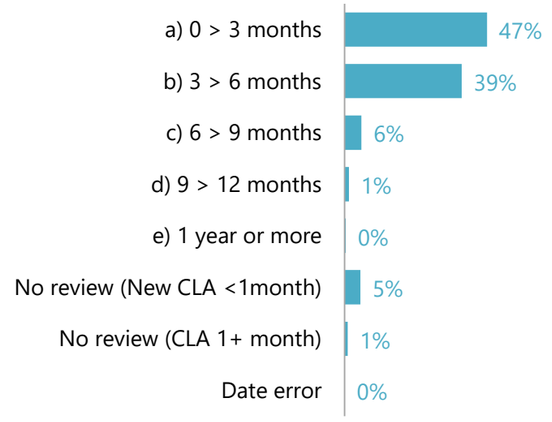


'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Comparing legal status of open CLA (snapshot)

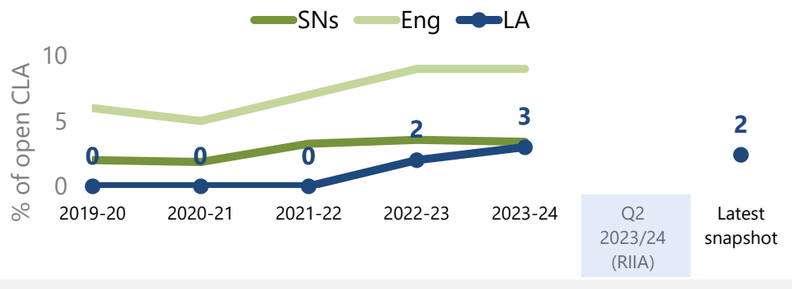


Time since latest review

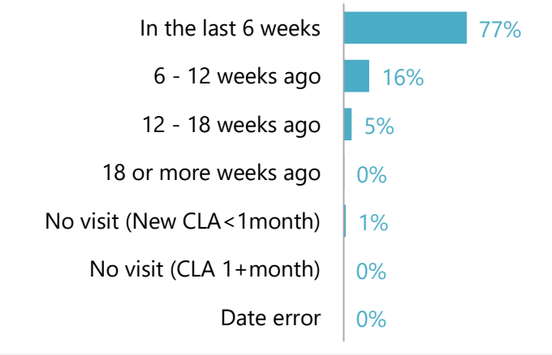


12 open unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

UASC as a percentage of CLA (snapshot)



Time since the child was last seen



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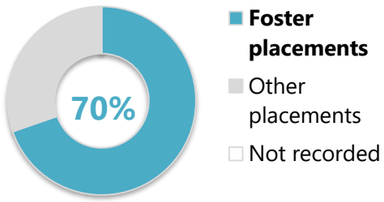
Children Looked After (CLA) placements

Snapshot 30/06/2025

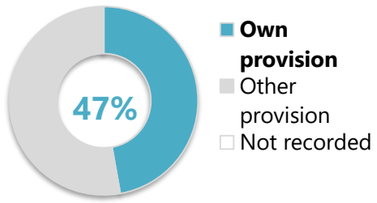
CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



LA 2023-24	70%
SNs 2023-24	67%
Eng 2023-24	67%

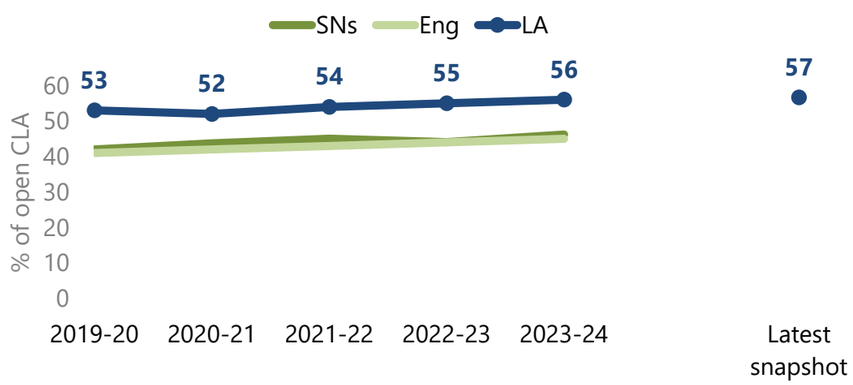
Own provision



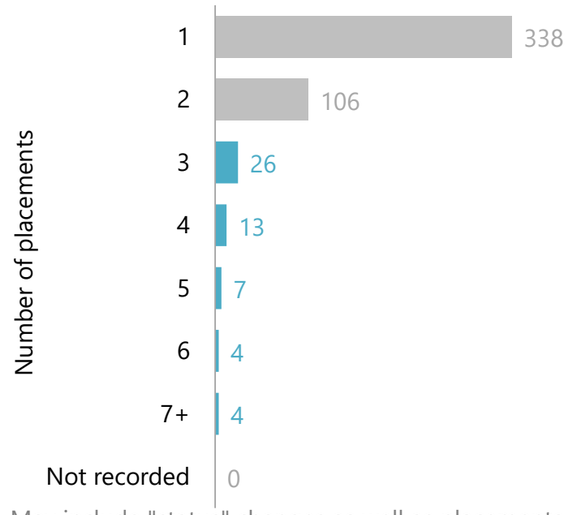
LA 2023-24	46%
SNs 2023-24	48%
Eng 2023-24	43%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	213	99	35	347
Placed for adoption	0	0	5	5
Placed with parents	0	0	35	35
Independent living	0	0	0	0
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	1	13	0	14
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	1	1
Children's Homes	15	45	0	60
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	0	0
Family Centre	0	0	0	0
Young Offender Institution	0	0	6	6
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	6	23	1	30
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	235	180	83	498

CLA placements out of borough

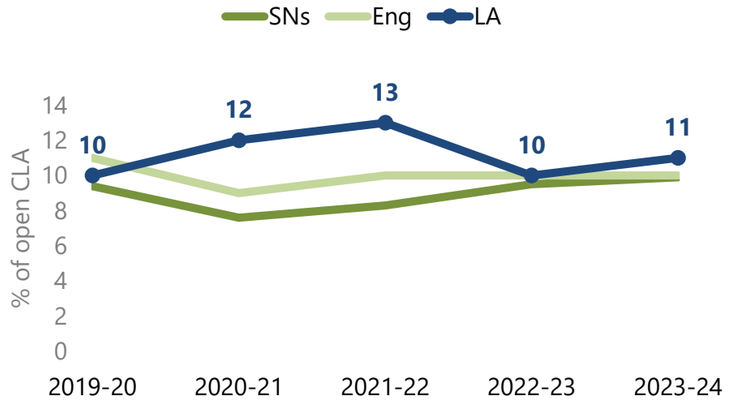


Number of placements in the last 12 months



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing short term placement stability



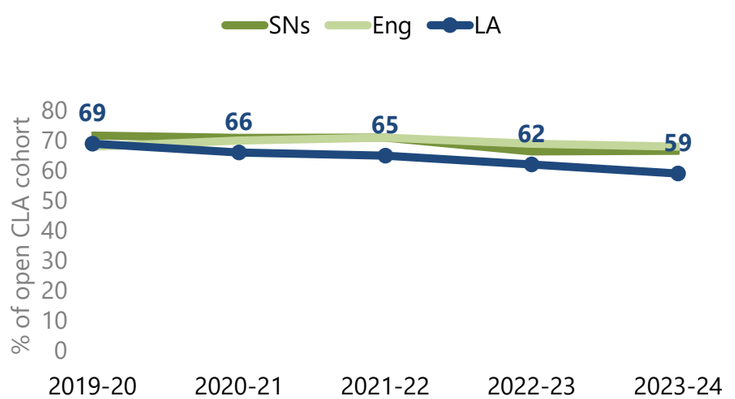
Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more

May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing long term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

#REF!

Children Looked After (CLA) health and missing/absent from placement

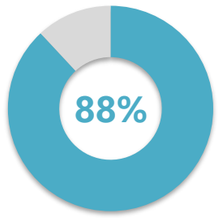
Snapshot 30/06/2025

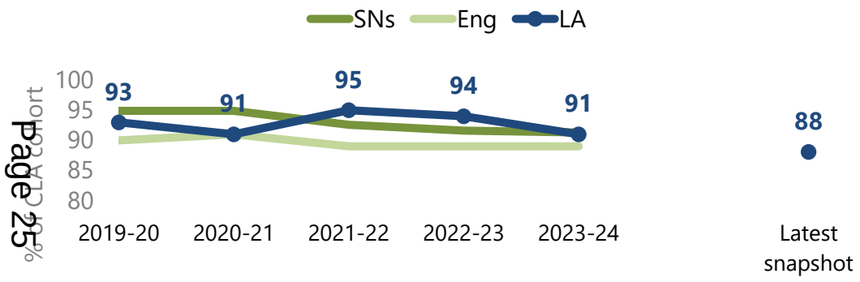
Health

352 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

Health assessments

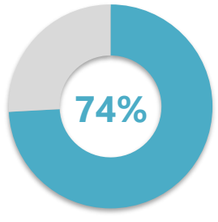
Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)

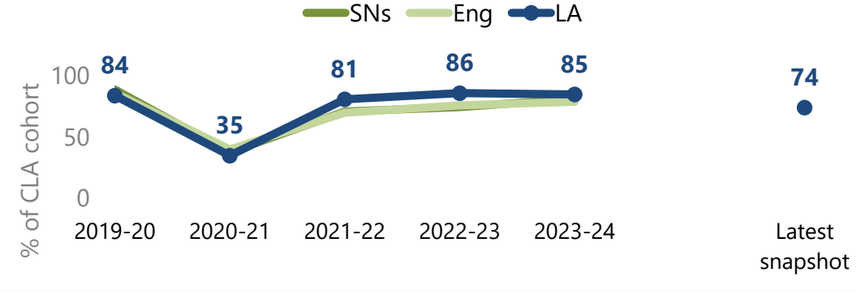




Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.





Missing from placement

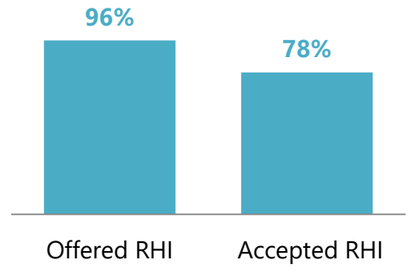
72 of 591 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 23-24	SNs 23-24	Eng 23-24
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	72 of 591	83		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	12%	12%	11%	11%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	536	431		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	7.4	5.2	6.7	6.5

Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	69 of 72	96%
Missing children not offered return interview	0 of 72	0%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	1 of 72	1%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	2 of 72	3%

	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	54 of 69	78%
Missing children not accepted return interview	13 of 69	19%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	2 of 69	3%



Absent from placement

9 of 591 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 23-24	SNs 23-24	Eng 23-24
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	9 of 591	c		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	2%	c	2%	2%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	15	c		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	1.7	c	0.8	4.0

#REF!

Care leavers eligibility, PA allocation and pathway plans

Snapshot 30/06/2025

493 care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services

Care leavers by age and eligibility

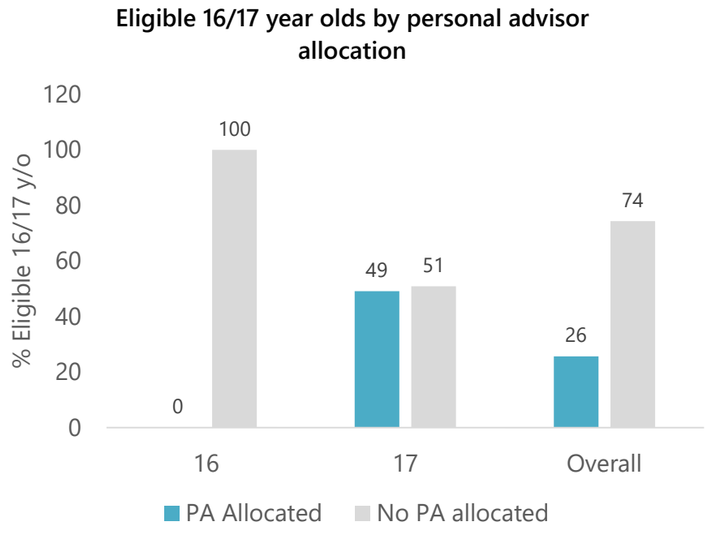
(where highlighted, please check eligibility/age criteria)

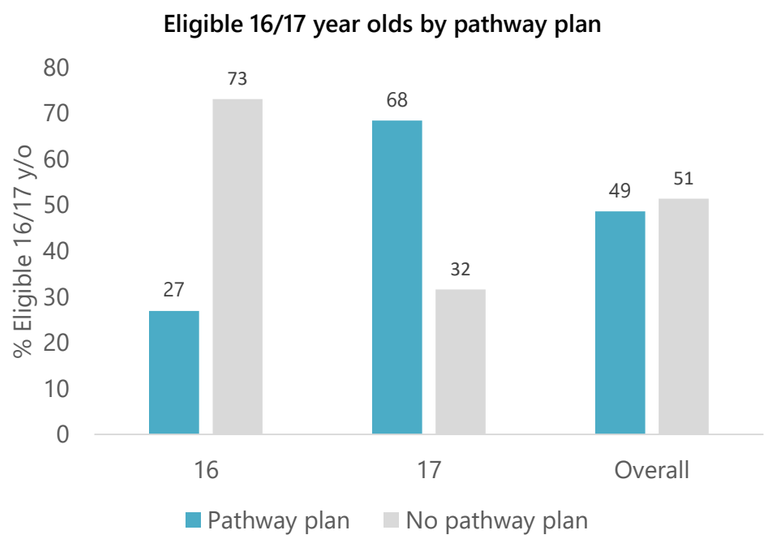
	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	Other	**Total**
16	52	0	0	0	0	52
17	57	5	0	5	0	67
18	0	0	66	3	0	69
19	0	0	60	1	0	61
20	0	0	56	3	0	59
21	0	0	59	1	0	60
22	0	0	48	0	0	48
23	0	0	40	0	0	40
24	0	0	37	0	0	37
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	109	5	366	13	0	493

Care leaver eligibility summary (please refer to DfE guidance for full eligibility criteria)

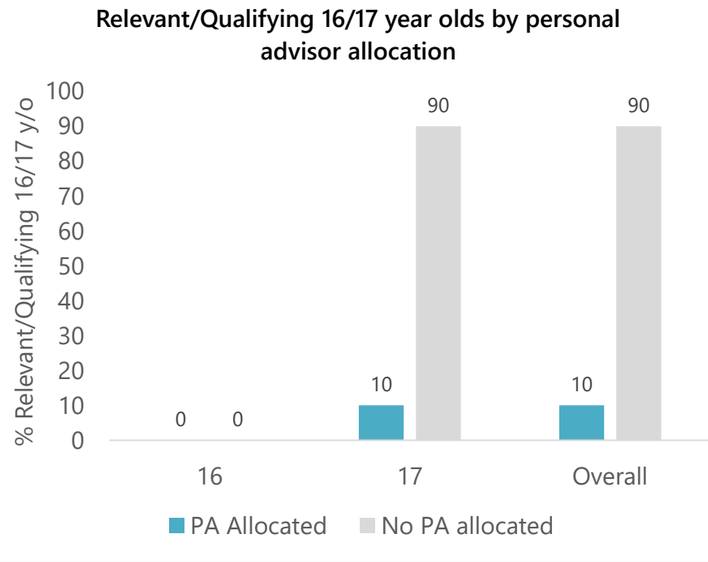
Eligible	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Currently looked after
Relevant	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ No longer looked after
Former Relevant	~ Aged between 18 and 25 ~ Previously an eligible or relevant child (see above definitions)
Qualifying (Annex A requires only those requesting and receiving a service)	~ Aged between 16 and 21 (or 25 if in education) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ **Not** looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 or ~ privately fostered after the age of 16 but before the age of 18 or ~ were looked after prior to becoming subject to a SGO

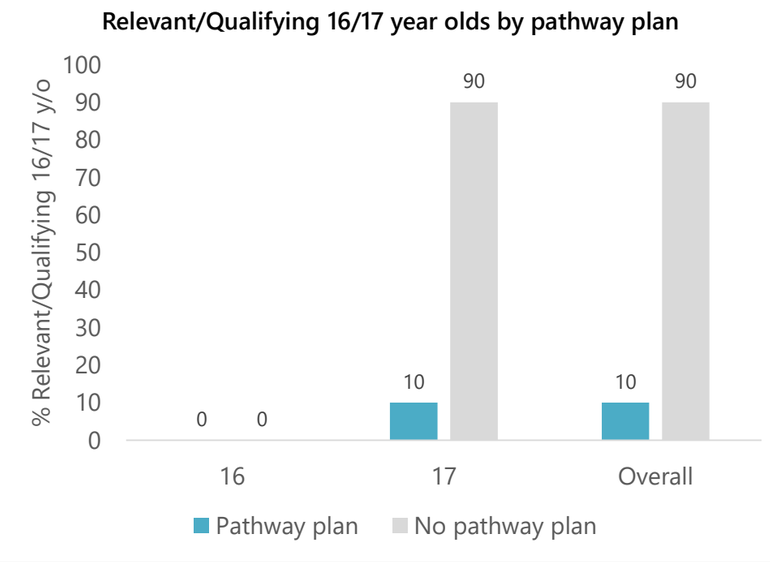
Eligible Children (16/17 year olds) - comparing personal advisor allocation and pathway plans





Relevant and Qualifying Children (16/17 year olds) - comparing personal advisor allocation and pathway plans



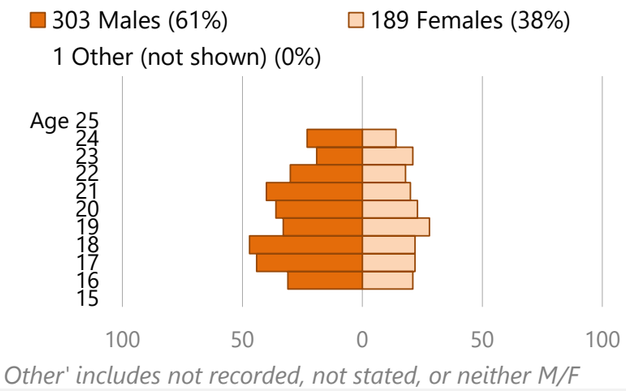


#REF!

Care leavers demographics and UASC

Snapshot 30/06/2025

Age and sex



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

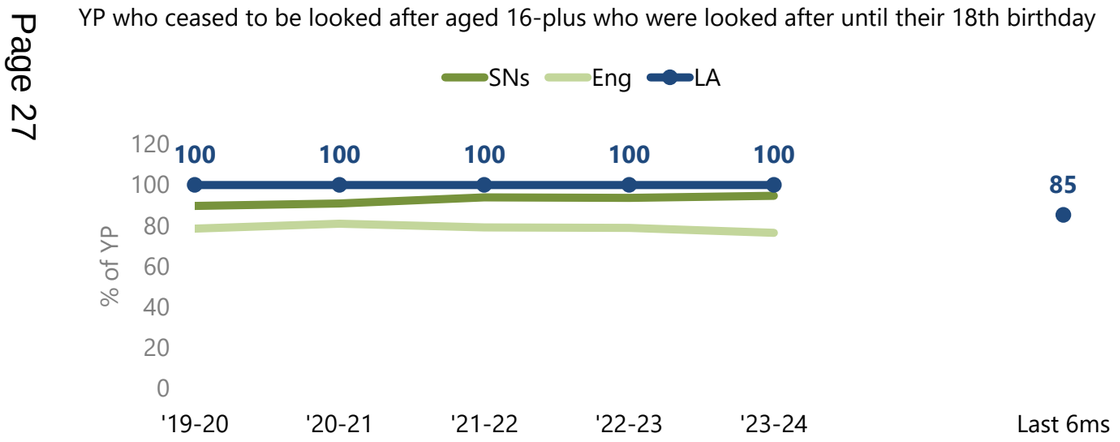
Ethnic background

White	75%
Mixed	7%
Asian or Asian British	4%
Black or black British	7%
Other ethnic group	6%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

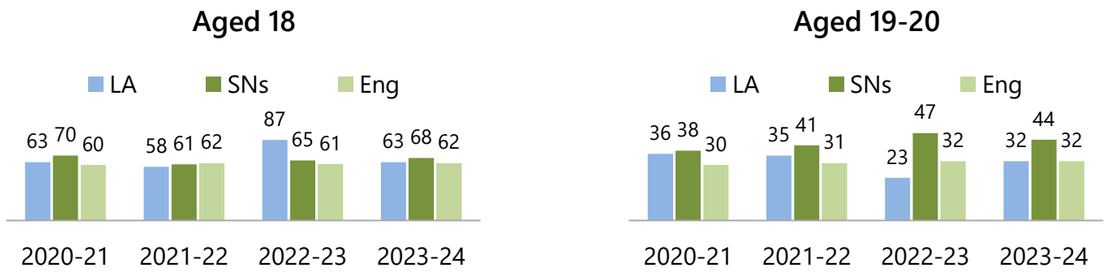
#REF!

48 (10%) care leavers with a disability

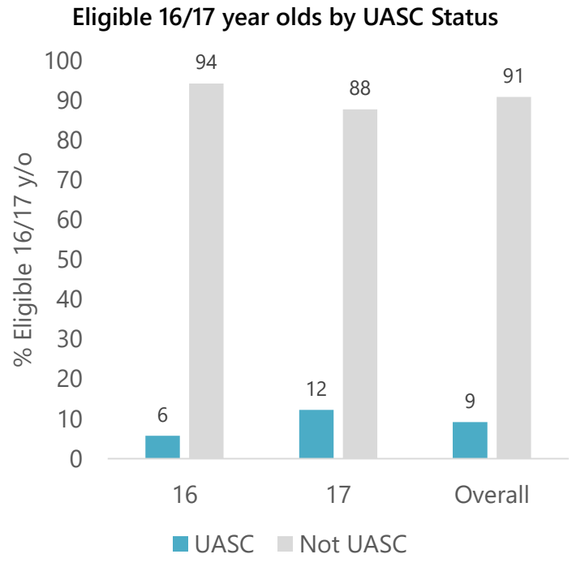
Remained in care until aged 18

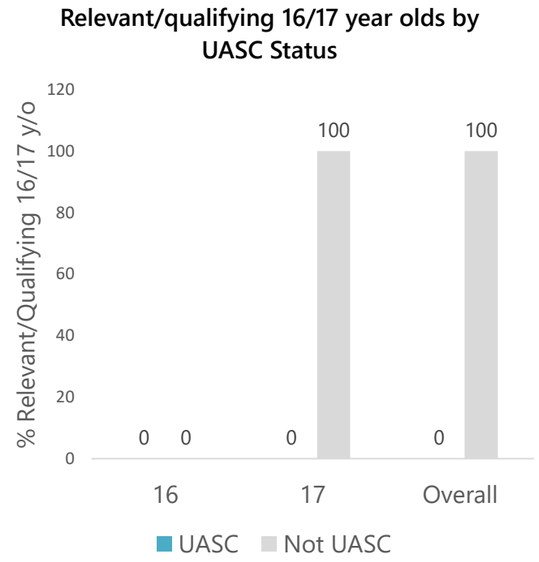


Remain with former foster carer

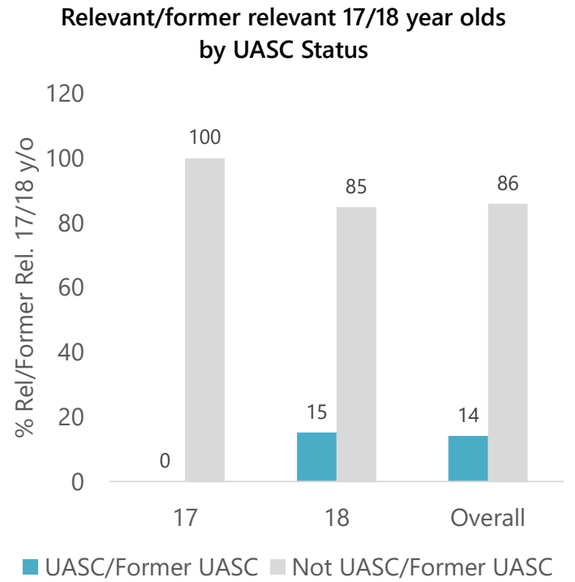


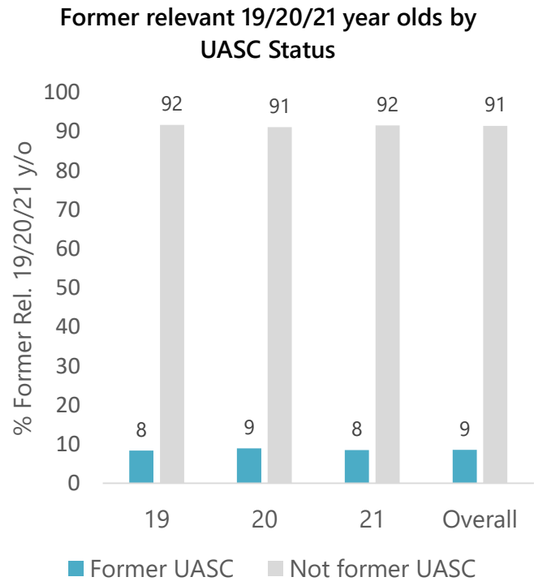
Care leavers - UASC/Former UASC (16/17 year olds)





Care leavers - UASC/Former UASC (17/18 & 19/20/21 year olds)





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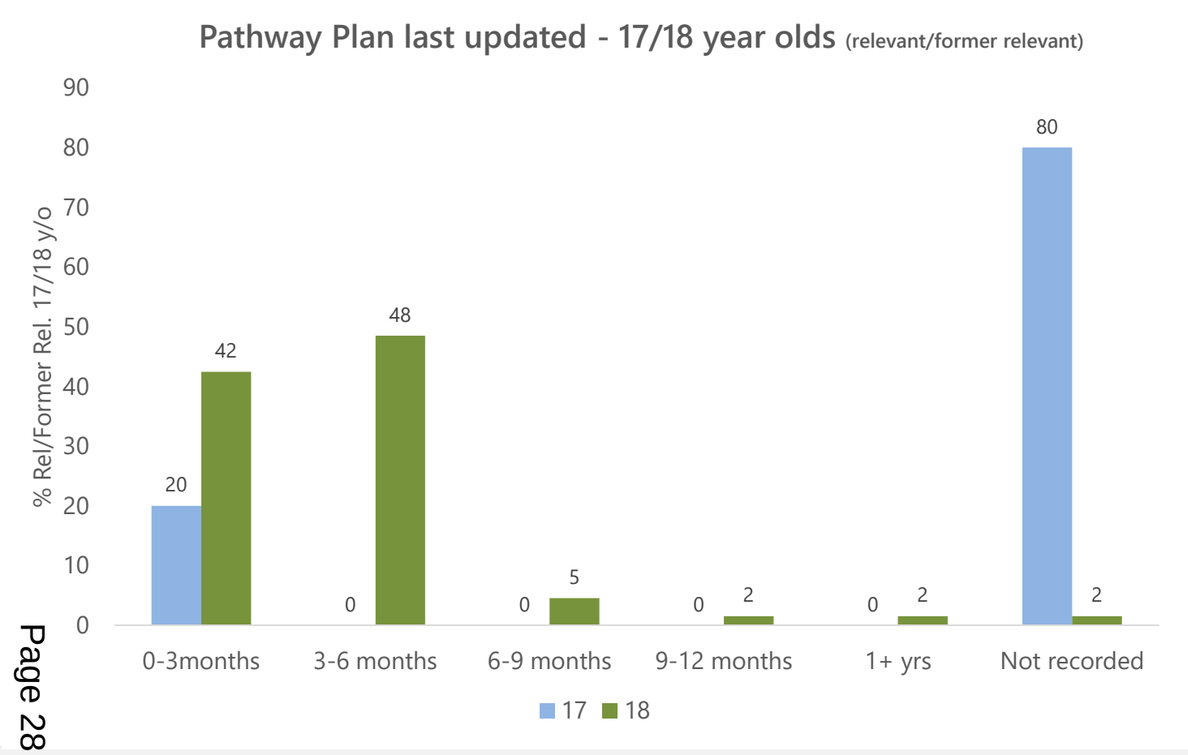
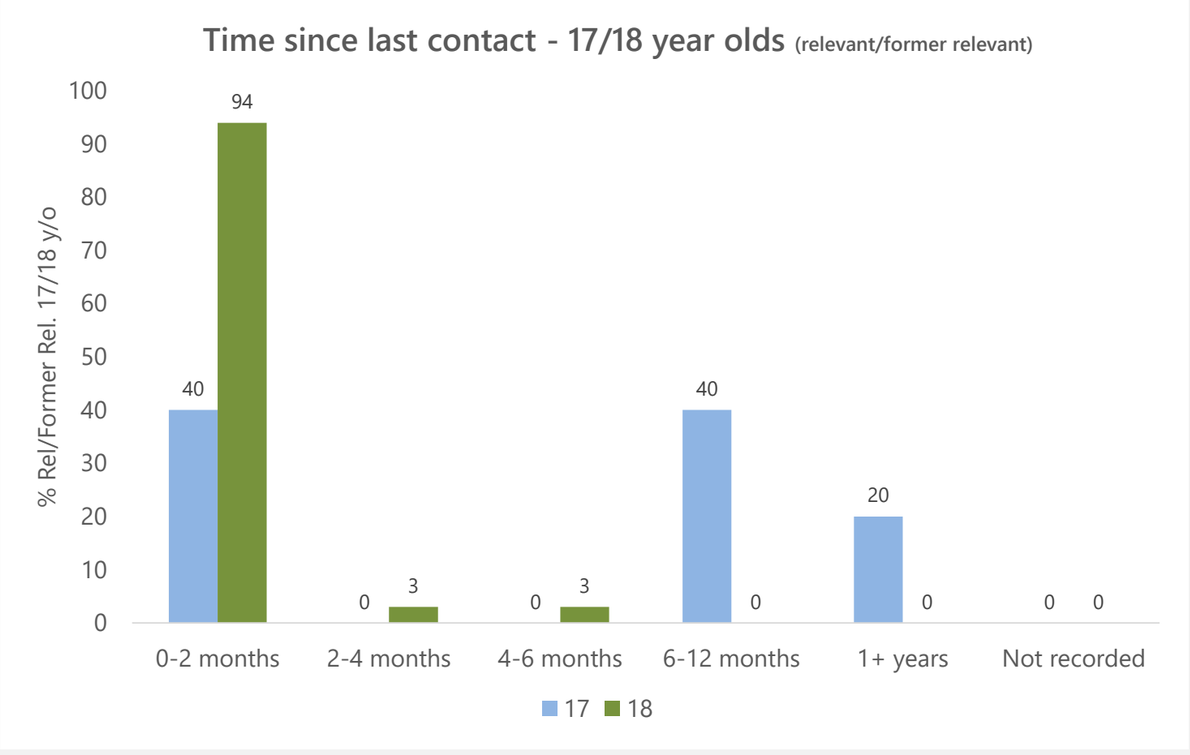
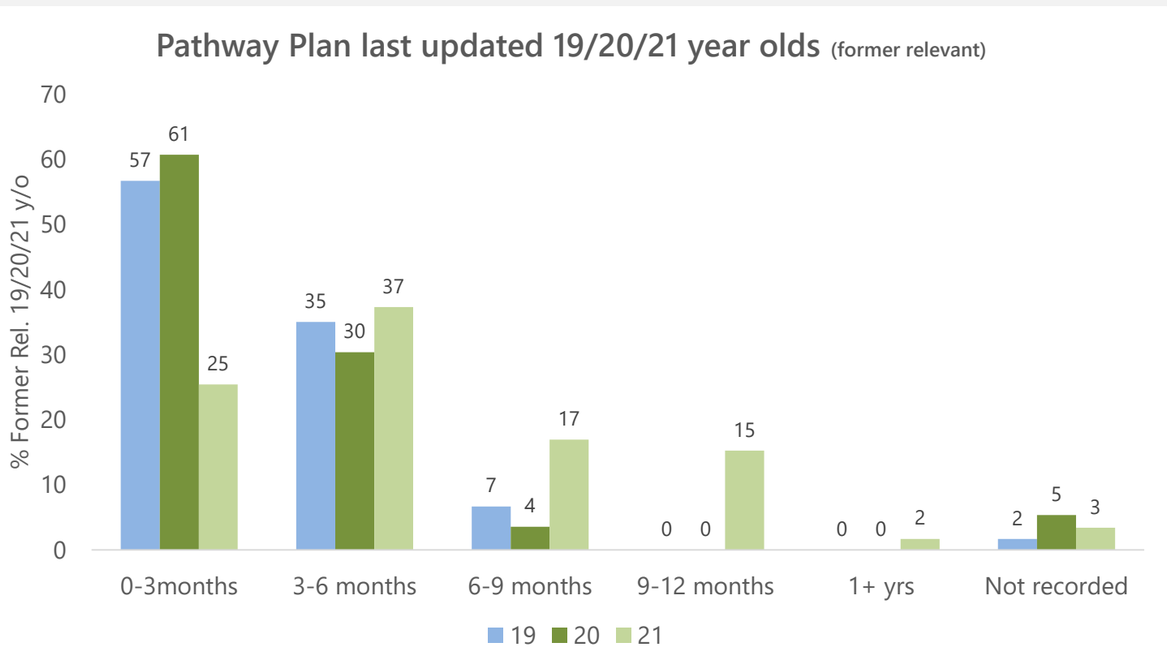
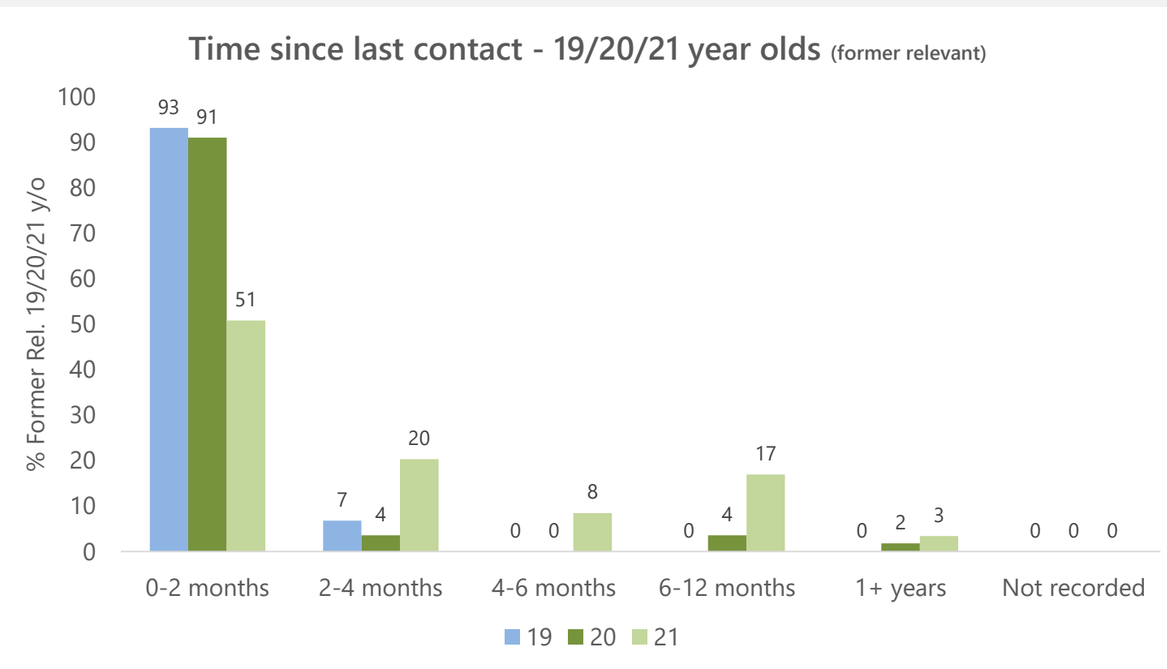
Care leavers pathway plan and contact timescales

Snapshot 30/06/2025









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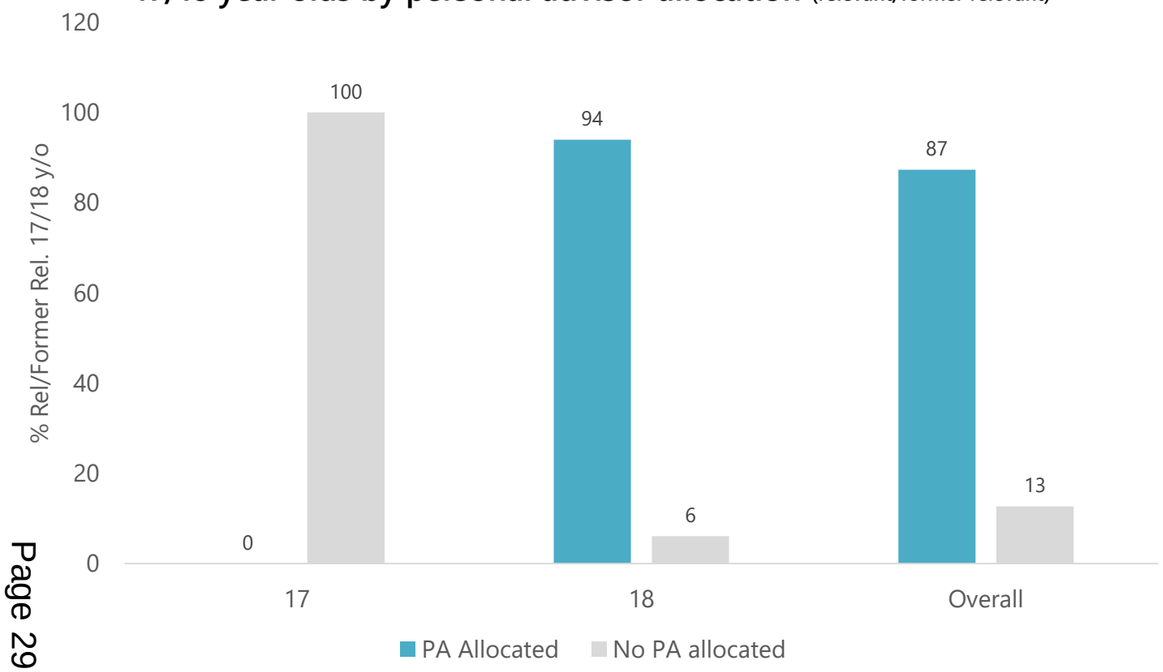
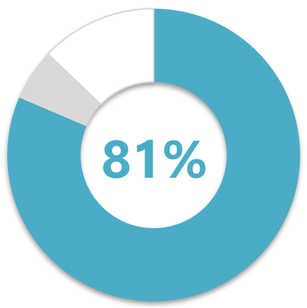
Care leavers PA allocation and in touch

Snapshot 30/06/2025

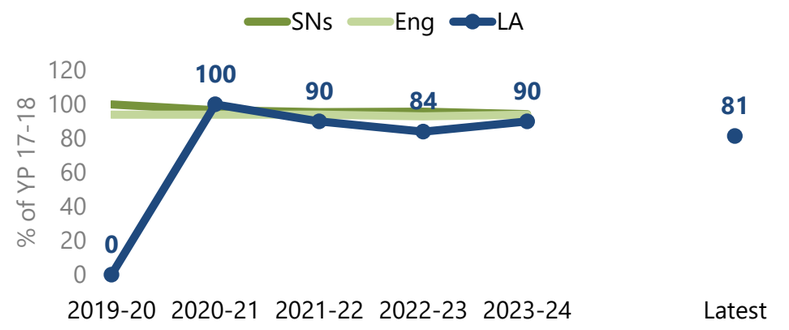
17/18 year olds by personal advisor allocation (relevant/former relevant)



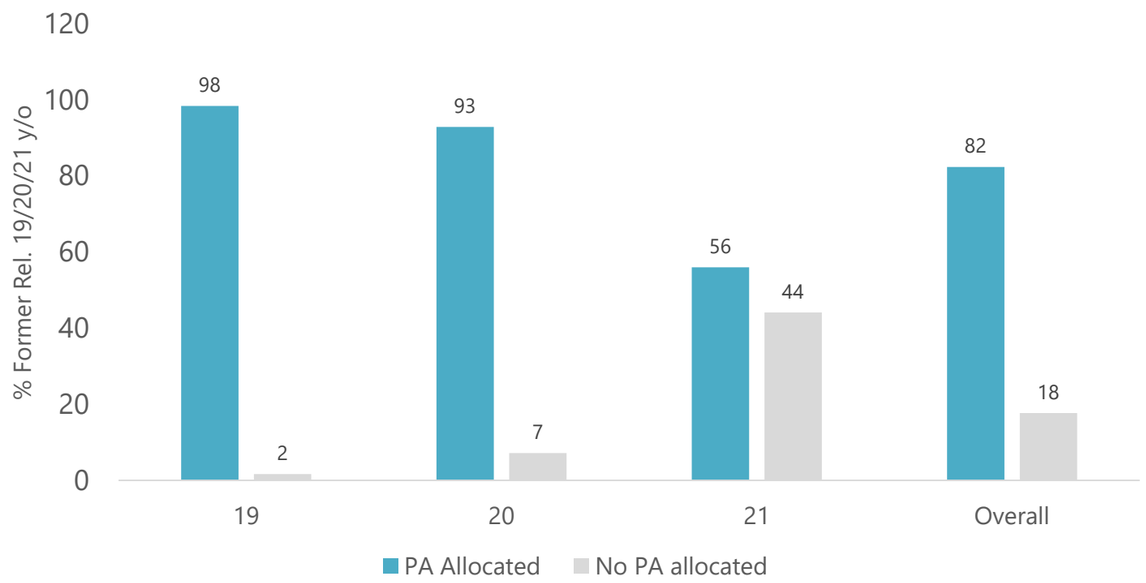
LA in touch with 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



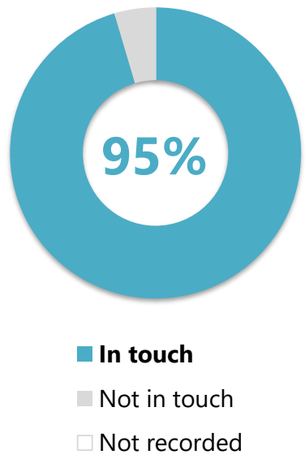
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	5	65	70
LA in touch with YP	0%	88%	81%



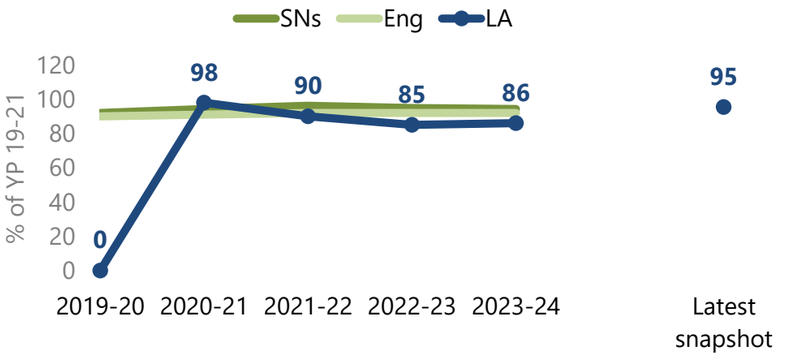
19/20/21 year olds by personal advisor allocation (former relevant)



LA in touch with 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	60	56	59	175
LA in touch with YP	97%	93%	97%	95%



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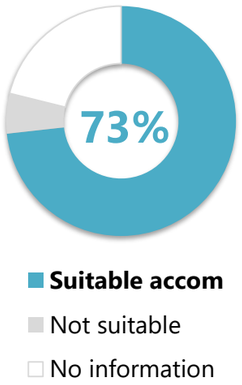
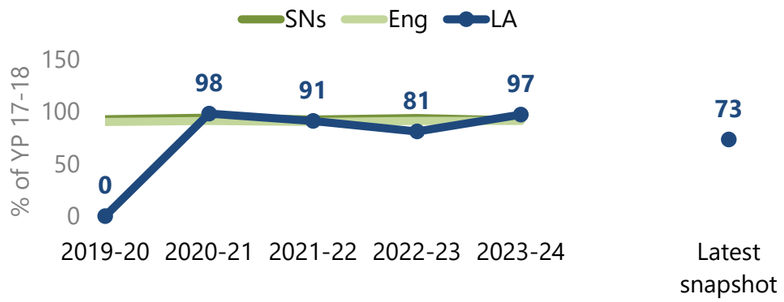
Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

Snapshot 30/06/2025

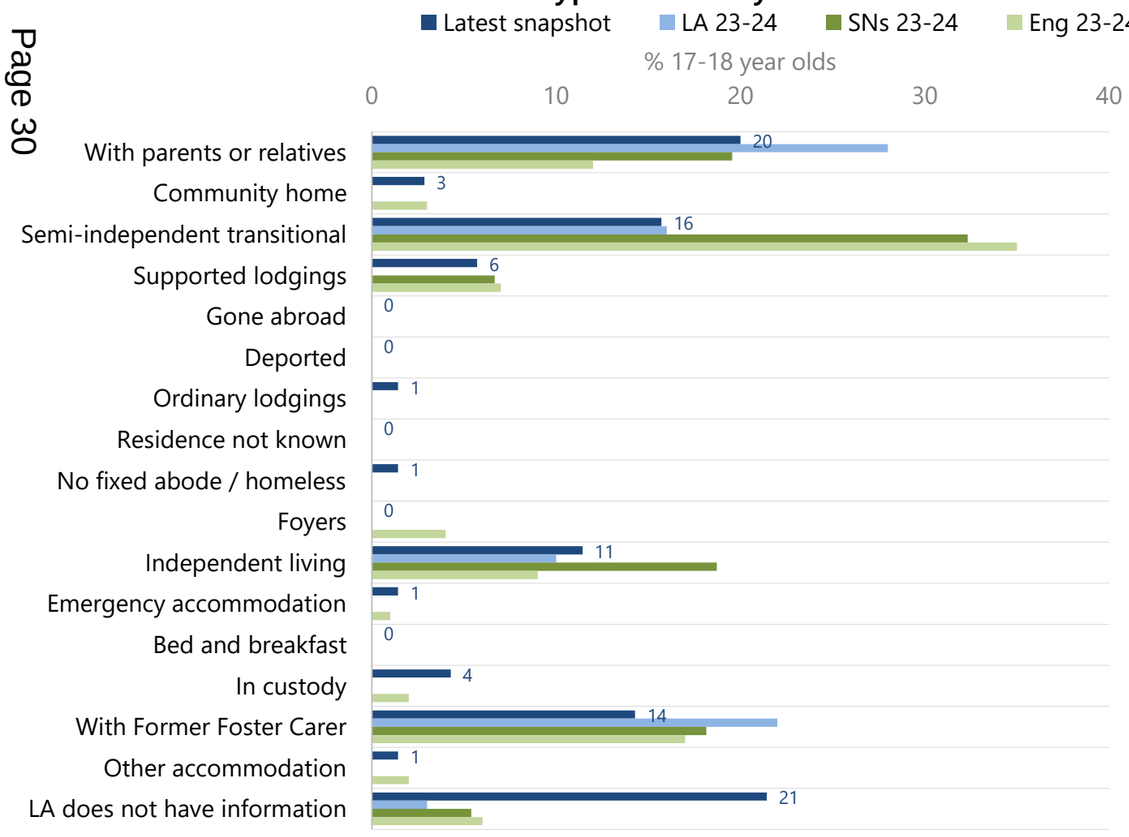
Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



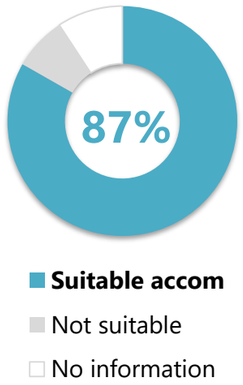
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	5	66	71
In suitable accommodation	0%	79%	73%



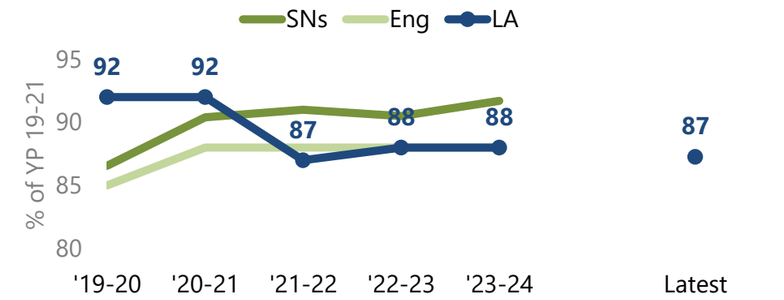
Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds



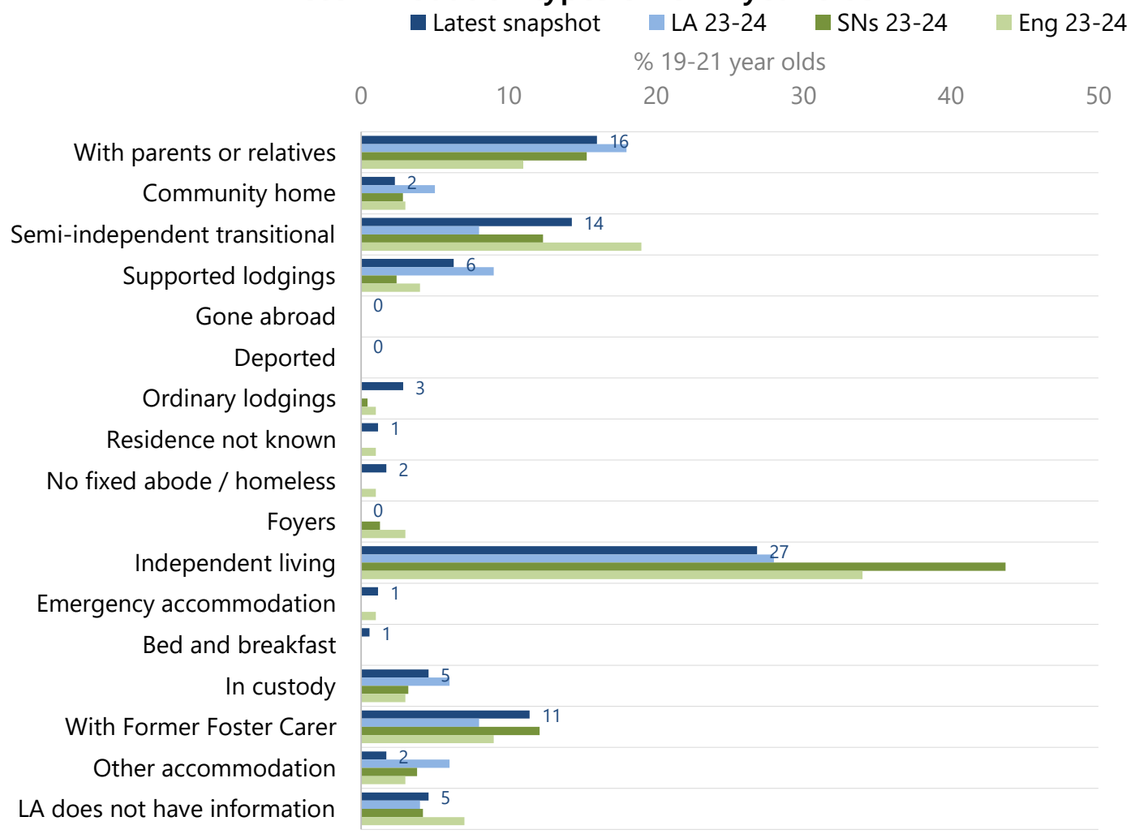
Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	59	55	59	173
In suitable accommodation	90%	84%	76%	83%



Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds



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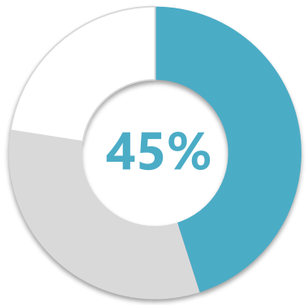
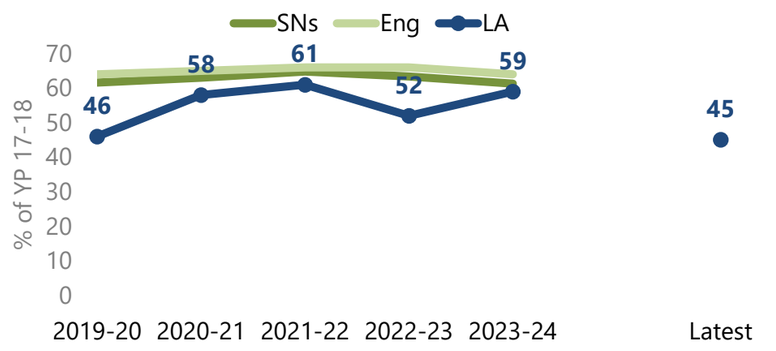
Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

Snapshot 30/06/2025

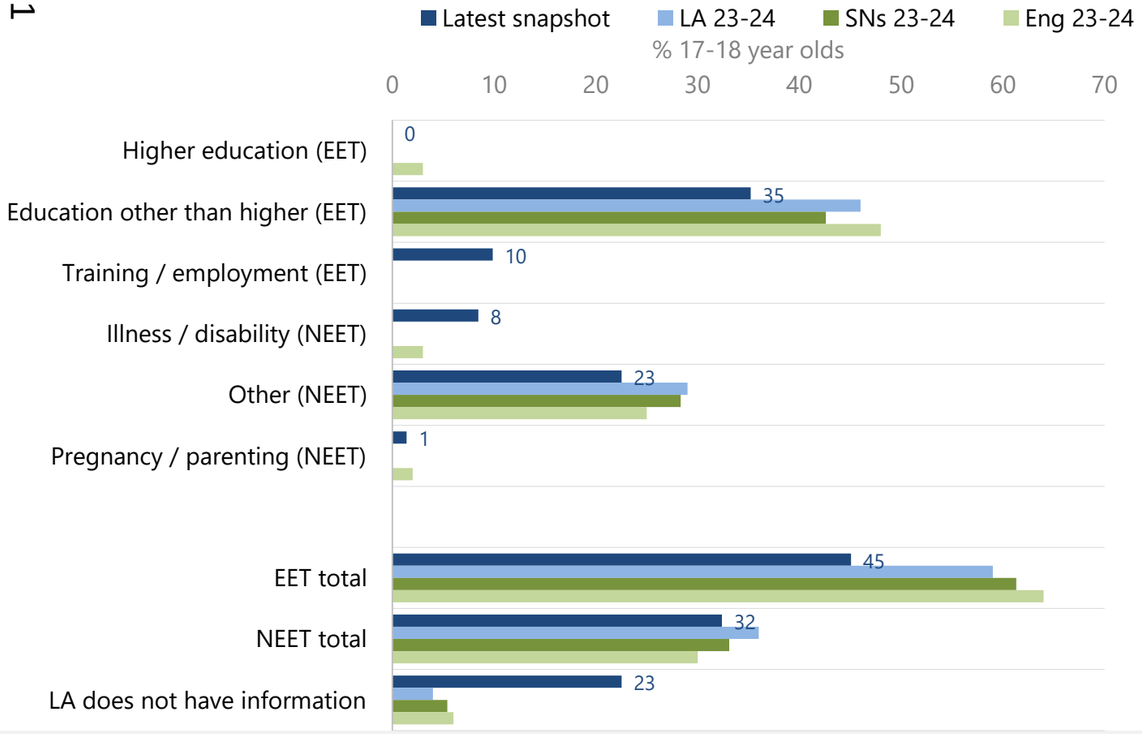
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	5	66	71
In EET	0%	48%	45%



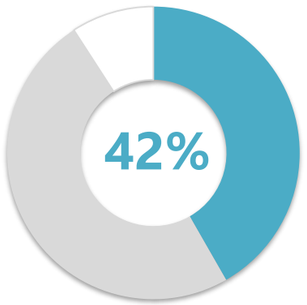


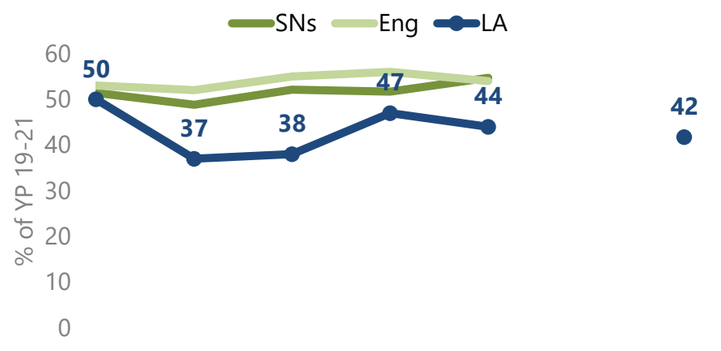
Activity types of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



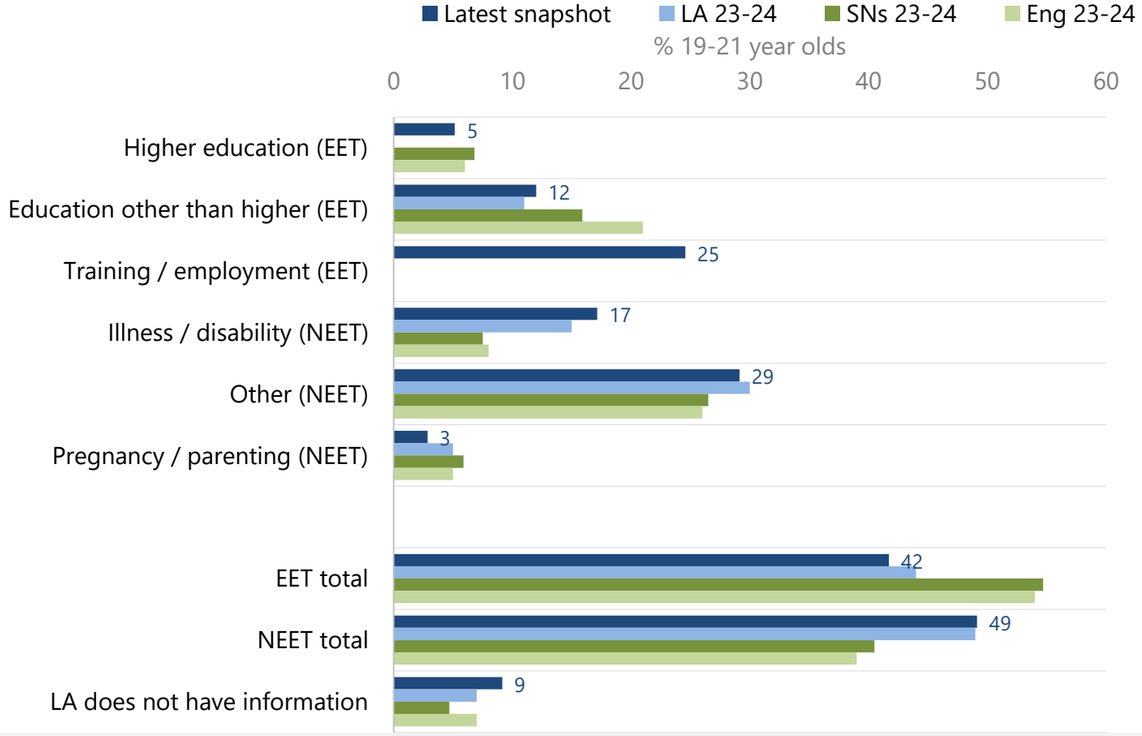
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	60	56	59	175
In EET	48%	39%	37%	42%





Activity types of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



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Agenda Item 8

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	Middlesbrough moving forward

Report of:	Director of Children's Care – Dawn Alaszewski
Relevant Executive Member:	Executive Member for Children's Services
Submitted to:	You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	10 July 2025
Title:	Children in Care Update
Report for:	Discussion
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Safe and resilient communities
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Report is for information only
Subject to call in?:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)
No decision information only.

Executive summary
The report is an outline of current numbers of children in our care and their circumstances in relation to permanence and Education, Training and Employment. The report is intended for information and further discussion by the committee.

1. Purpose

1.1 To inform the committee of the current numbers and brief circumstances of children in our care.
1.2 To inform the committee of actions being taken to improve the experience and outcomes for children in our care.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Board

- Acknowledges the information presented
- Makes any recommendations and actions required

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Not applicable

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 Update on children in care data/timescales/ numbers of care proceedings currently/PLO

We currently have 498 children who are cared for, 322 have plans of permanence and are supported by the Children Looked After Teams. 15 have plans of permanence and are supported by social workers in the Children with Disability Service. The remaining children and young people are subject to permanence planning within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service and Assessment Service.

Of those subject to permanence planning a majority are subject to legal processes in order to determine plans of permanence. We have 2 children who are in our care who are currently subject to Deprivation of Liberty Orders under the jurisdiction of the Court of Protection, within Safeguarding and Care Planning.

4.2 Update overview around children in our care who are NEET and what we are doing to support young people back into education, employment and training

The Personal Advisors work with their young people encouraging them and guiding them on how to access education and supporting them to access key agencies who can assist them. The key services we use are as follows; the NEET Clinic, the Work Readiness Team, and the Middlesbrough Employability Hub drop in which takes place twice a week. Discussions between education and social care continue as needed for individual children and young people with complex needs to develop plans and opportunities for them to engage in employment, education and training.

The Early Help team provide support to young people around education, employment and training, which is available up to 21 years. Discussions have been held with the service to seek to extend this to 25 years in line with the extended duties. The service is seen to have a positive impact for young people, and it is hoped that with the expansion of this work, that this will extend to all young people who are cared for and care experienced.

Links have been made with the Care Leavers Covenant in June 2025, which will assist in supporting the development of apprenticeships within the Council and wider Middlesbrough organisations.

4.3 DfE work/reunification
The funding for this aspect of the work by the DfE ended in March 2025. However, continues within the teams as part of our role and responsibility, this is monitored through Permanency Monitoring Group (PMG). Although a change in working practices and culture was needed, across a number of services, this has been a positive intervention with either changed orders or care orders discharged in some cases and clarity on the need for long-term foster care for some children and young people. Courts have been positive about this work and have provided compliments around this.

4.4 Fostering
Linked to the reunification work has been the development of our Fostering Service, with the addition of a Kinship Team, via the Modernising Fostering transformation work. This team will provide support to SGO and CAO carers post order, when the children are no longer open to Children Services. This team will provide reviews of support plans, access to training and support groups for kinship carers. Managers and legal colleagues recently met with the senior Judge to advise of the work in this area, which was received very positively, with the senior Judge agreeing to notify all Judges within the Court of the work by Middlesbrough.

Although we remain linked to Foster with North East (FwNE), changes have been made to our marketing strategy over the past few months, to encourage more local foster carers. Middlesbrough Council has been recognised as a Fostering Friendly Employer, by the Fostering Network, which is a national organisation. The Fostering Team have held the first of the fostering events with staff at Fountain Court, to advise employees of the fostering role and the process to approval as a foster carer. This work will be ongoing, within our own organisation to encourage people to be assessed as foster carers.

Part of the updated marketing campaign has seen recent media activity to homes in Middlesbrough and via the website, which has been very positive. A Facebook post reached 117,000 people, had 717 shares, 330 comments, 334 reactions e.g. liked, 26 enquiries to Middlesbrough, 29 enquiries to other LAs in the region. Information sent to 44,084 residents via My Middlesbrough, 19,040 opened this (44.4%), 287 people clicked the link and 10 enquiries were made to FwNE. This has been very positive for the authority, and we hope to see conversions to foster carers from this initial campaign, with other campaigns to follow.

4.5 Care experienced young people updates; 249 care experienced young people are open to the Pathways service. 211 are aged between 18 and 21, and 38 are aged over 21 and up to age 25. There are currently no young people in the eligibility category of eligible

or relevant, 241 under the category of Former Relevant child, 8 under the category of Qualifying Care Leaver. There are 3 young people with the category of relevant child and 110 with the category of eligible.

The 2 Pathways Teams are proving successful, with increased oversight and support provided to the staff. Personal Advisors have on average 19 young people each to support, plus on average 3 young people identified as having complex needs, who are not 18 yet. The Personal Advisors co- work these young people with the allocated children's Social Worker.

Work has continued to embed the transition pathway; this includes children and young people from the age of 15 ¾ being heard at the Transitions Panel to ensure that Adult Services are aware of any that may need a service post 18 and at housing panel to ensure we have a firm plan around accommodation.

All 18–25 year olds have an allocated PA. There are 34 17-year-olds, who are not allocated a PA. There is one vacant PA post in the team, which is currently going through the process to request recruitment. Demand currently exceeds available PA resource despite the previous agreement for additional posts in 2024. This is as a result of more young people becoming cared for who, by virtue of the age and number of weeks cared for prior to and after their 16th birthday, are then eligible for a leaving care service. Changes have been made to role types in the system, so that recording is more accurate.

The Care Leavers Hub has not been progressed as planned. We are working with colleagues to seek a suitable location, complete any work needed and open this resource as soon as possible.

5. **Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**
   Not applicable report is for information only

6. **Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**
   Not applicable report is for information only

Background papers

Not applicable report is for information only

Contact: Tracy Jelfs
Email: tracy_jelfs@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Safeguarding & Children's Care

Annual report on Private Fostering

for 2024/25

Report Prepared by Lucy Cook

Head of Service – Safeguarding and Care Planning, and Children with Disabilities.

June 2025

Contents

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Definition of a Private Fostering Arrangement

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 years of age (or 18 if disabled) who is cared for by an adult who is not a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent by marriage, sister or brother where the child is to be cared for in that person's home for 28 days or more and has been arranged without the involvement of the local authority.

A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster the child. The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard the child's welfare. Overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the privately fostered child remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

Regulatory Context

The 2005 regulations are made under the Children Act 1989. The National Minimum Standards are issued by the Secretary of State under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities in their social services functions to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. As such the National Minimum Standards do not have the full force of statute, but should be complied with unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation.

The National Minimum Standards apply to all local authorities. They are minimum standards, rather than 'best possible' practice. The standards are grouped under a series of key topics:

- Statement on private fostering
- Notification
- Safeguarding and promote welfare
- Advice and support
- Monitoring compliance

Each standard, or group of standards, is preceded by a statement of the outcome to be achieved by the local authority. The standards are intended to be qualitative although they are also designed to be measureable. It is intended that the standards will be used by local authorities and by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) to focus on securing positive outcomes for privately fostered children and young people and reducing any risks to their welfare and safety. In inspecting against these standards, CSCI follows a proportionate inspection methodology, which enables consistent judgments to be made across the country.

Impact on Local Authorities

Whilst it is a private arrangement between the parent(s) and carer(s), and is one made without the involvement of the Local Authority, Middlesbrough Safeguarding & Children's Care has a legal duty to ensure that any child or young person is safe and well looked after and does not come to any harm in a private fostering arrangement.

The National Minimum Standards specify a minimum standard for local authority practice in the fulfilment of Children Act duties and functions in relation to private fostering. They, along with the measures in section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the 2005 regulations,

are intended to better focus local authorities' attention on private fostering, in part by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

Local Procedures

Middlesbrough Children's Services hold their local policy and procedures on TriX and can be located at https://www.proceduresonline.com/middlesbrough/cs/p_private_fost.html#

The public facing page for information about what do when a private fostering arrangement is identified, is at https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding/fostering-and-adoption/private-fostering

A joint private fostering awareness campaign is being progressed as requested by STSCP and the proposal will be submitted alongside this report.

Middlesbrough's Private Fostering Arrangement Overview

Data recorded in the PF1 Statutory Report on L Liquid Logic 23/24 is detailed in the table below.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Number of new notifications	4	3	3	3	8
Number of new Private Fostering arrangements that started in the year	4	3	3	3	7
Number of arrangements ending in the year	3	7	4	4	3
Number of Private Fostering arrangements still in place at the end of march each year	6	1	1	0	4

The number of private fostering arrangements within Middlesbrough fairly low, though an increase is noted, potentially due to the work undertaken to raise awareness.t. We will continue with awareness raising across the partnership in the coming year in order to assure ourselves we are notified of as many arrangements as possible and the arrangements are appropriately assessed, and supported.

During the reporting year 24/25 8 notifications for private fostering were received with an average age of.

At the end of the year, 4 private fostering arrangements continued to be in place. Below is an overview of the children's circumstances to give the board insight into how Private Fostering can support certain circumstances/

A male aged 13 at the time he entered a private fostering arrangement (now 14). K had lived with his father for a significant period safeguarding concerns necessitated a return to his mothers care. K struggled to adjust to living there with his siblings as he had not lived with them for some time, He went to stay with his cousin and her partner with his mother's

agreement. This became a private fostering agreement, he stayed there for around about six months, supported as a CIN before returning to live with his mother.

A male aged 10 remains subject to a private fostering arrangement. He has lived with his father since 2020 after his father was concerned about D's mothers lifestyle and substance use. D's father is in the British Army and the fostering arrangement came into effect when his father was on active service abroad. D is cared for by his maternal great aunt under a private fostering arrangement. When D's father returned it has evolved that D spends his time between his fathers and his Aunts, mostly as at his Aunts he is closer to school and his father is working full time. This arrangement works well and has meant D remains in the care of his birth family.

A female, was 13 when she entered in a private fostering arrangement (now 14). K has primarily lived with her mother, however this relationship has been difficult and K has not always felt safe. Over time she has more and more gravitated to her mother's friends home. She has built a close relationship with the family and the adults worked together and agreed that they should formalise the arrangement under private fostering, though K saw her mother and siblings every day. This arrangement ended and K returned to her mothers care after four months.

A female is 7 years old. A lived with her grandmother under an SGO, however over time expressed she wanted to live with her mat half sibling, who lives with her father, A's step father and his partner. This arrangement continues and is working well.

Persons disqualified from private fostering

No prohibitions have been issued during the 24/25 year.

National Minimum Standards Middlesbrough Compliance

The strategic lead for Private Fostering sits with the Head of Safeguarding Care planning.

This section of the report will consider the local authority's compliance with the minimum standards during the course of 23/24 and will provide a summary of the work that has been undertaken in relation to each minimum standard.

Standard 1 – Statement on Private Fostering

The local Authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.

The statement of purpose is available on the council internet page here https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding/fostering-and-adoption/private-fostering

The policy and procedure is up to date and sufficiently detailed to enable its application into social work responses. This is supported by the Children's Services procedures manual which remains relevant and linked above.

The low level reporting of Private Fostering in Middlesbrough is a challenge and further work across the partnership has been identified to ensure that the community and professionals understand private fostering and respond to it appropriately.

Standard 2 - Notification

The local authority;

- **promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification;**
- **responds effectively to notifications; and**
- **deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified**

As detailed in standard 1, there have been a number of strategies to promote awareness of notification requirements. Significant work to raise awareness of private fostering in the community and across the partnership has been agreed, and a proposed plan will be submitted alongside this report. It has been identified that this will be a STSCP shared approach.

Information recorded within the PF1 annual report to the Government (available on LCS) identified that the Local Authority received 8 notification in the year 24/25

In all cases action was taken in accordance with requirements of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for carrying out visits.

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Standard 3 – Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare

The local authority determines the suitability of all aspects of the Private Fostering arrangement in accordance with regulations

Upon receipt of a notification, whether in accordance with regulation 3, 5 or 6, for the purposes of discharging its duty under section 67(1) of the Act (welfare of privately fostered children) the local authority must make arrangements to visit the proposed arrangement within 7 working days to:

- visit the premises where it is proposed that the child will be cared for and accommodated;
- visit and speak to the proposed private foster carer and to all members of the household;
- visit and speak with the child alone, unless the visiting worker considers it inappropriate;
- speak to and, if it is practicable to do so, visit every parent or person with parental responsibility for the child and
- establish such matters listed in Schedule 2/3 as appear to the officer to be relevant.

A written report, in the form of a Private Fostering Assessment, is then undertaken and presented to the responsible Head of Service for consideration/ratification.

Within the first year of the private fostering arrangements visits must be made at intervals of not more than six weeks; and in any second or subsequent year, at intervals of not more than 12 weeks. The frequency of such visits will be monitored and reviewed via regular performance meetings.

Any private fostering arrangements that continue over a year in duration are reviewed within Middlesbrough's Gateway panel in order to ensure continued that the arrangement continues to meet the child or young persons needs.

All children identified as being privately fostered have an Independent Reviewing Officer to support the review of the arrangements.

Standard 4 – Advice & Support (also applies to 5 and 6)

The local authority provides advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority is needed.

Private fostering arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis via Head of Service, with the social worker completing an updated assessment for consideration.

All privately fostered children have an allocated social worker and are treated as Children in Need. The only difference being that they are visited in accordance with Private Fostering requirements.

Standard 5

The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.

The child's social worker remains responsible for ensuring that the child's parent(s) are consulted and their views sought throughout the assessment process. Parent(s) are also provided with an informative leaflet, detailing private fostering arrangements and what this entails from a legislative and service delivery perspective.

Standard 6

Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.

Within the first year of the private fostering arrangement the child's social worker must visit at intervals of not more than six weeks; and in any second or subsequent year, at intervals of not more than 12 weeks.

All children party to private fostering arrangements remain subject to a Child in Need Plan, which clearly identifies the needs of the child, how such needs are to be met and specifies services to be provided.

Information packs were designed in consultation with children and young people who were privately fostered, to incorporate information and advice they felt would assist others subject to the same arrangements and that would help them understand the support and services available to them.

Standard 7 – Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions in relation to Private Fostering

The local authority has in place and implements effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.

Private Fostering arrangements within Middlesbrough in 24/25 are presented to the Head of service for ratification. An annual review of arrangements takes place through the review process.

Visits to children in private fostering arrangements are monitored regularly through performance meetings to ensure that visits are completed within timescales; where a concern is highlighted this is immediately addressed with the responsible team manager and action taken if required.

Developments for 24/25

The action plan focuses on the following areas:

- Ensure that there is a targeted awareness raising and training in private fostering and that this is regularly re-communicated to the workforce and the community. This is an action carried forward by agreement at STSCP. A joint campaign will take place between Middlesbrough and R&C
    - Through the Safeguarding Partnership – by Head of Service
    - By July 25

- Hold the annual review of private fostering arrangements
    - Head of Service, Team Manager and social work teams
    - This has taken place and a further review will take place in 6 months for newly made private fostering arrangements
      October 25

- Align Private Fostering Offer into overall Kinship Care service, to allow more tailored support for carers.

June 2025

Middlesbrough Virtual School Annual Report 2022/23

MIDDLESBROUGH CHILDREN MATTER

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Open letter to Middlesbrough We Matter Group and all children in the care of Middlesbrough.

This report describes how Middlesbrough Virtual School works closely with foster carers, social workers and schools to help support your education.

We do this by:

- ensuring we are there to support you, your social worker, carer and teachers whenever educational support is needed
- ensuring that you are placed in Good or Outstanding schools
- ensuring the spending of the Pupil Premium grant supports your learning
- ensuring that you are quickly admitted to new a school or college when needed
- helping you develop the highest aspirations, skills and knowledge to prepare you for your future career and adulthood

What is working well?

- Middlesbrough looked after children continue to achieve improved SATS results in Year 2 and year 6.
- We have provided more training and networking opportunities for your teachers to learn more about how to support you well.
- We have started working with Teesside University, who will invite you to visit from year 5 onwards.
- We continue to work with all North East universities who will work with you from year 7 onwards.
- We have provided more trauma and attachment support in schools than ever before to help teachers to develop further knowledge with our PROCLAIM project.
- We ran our first face to face enrichment including the summer programme supporting over 130 looked after children to access over 50 enrichment opportunities.
- The majority of all out looked after children said they really enjoyed school last year.

What can we improve?

We want all children to make good progress in their learning and to reach their academic potential.

To help achieve this we will:

- continue to invest in reading materials for you to read at home
- continue to use extra tuition to support learning if you need support
- continue to provide training and networking opportunities for your teachers so they can support your learning better
- continue to find creative ways to collect, listen, hear and act on your views

We would love to hear your thoughts on how we can better help you, so please send us a message!

We will write back to you to tell you how we are going to help.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Banks

Virtual School Head Victoria_Banks@Middlesbrough.gov.uk Tel: 01642 201885

The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of children in our care during the academic year 2022/2023. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the key stakeholders, so they are given every opportunity to achieve the best learning outcomes, to explore some of the barriers they continue to face and includes the plans to overcome these. I hope you get from the Annual Report how determined we are to ensure children in our care get the very best experience from their early years providers, schools and Post 16 providers to make sure the best results can be achieved.

The Virtual School is very clear that schools also need to ensure that our most vulnerable learners are given every opportunity to succeed. This is not just about equality of opportunity but furthermore, equality of outcome. The report highlights the additional duties that the Virtual School has in raising the profile and offering advice and guidance of previously looked after children, care leavers and children known to Social Care.

Foreword

I am delighted, to be able to write this introduction to my third annual report taking the lead of a dedicated team of officers who are committed to supporting all those involved in meeting the needs of our children in care. The team's contributions, by way of compiling this report, clearly demonstrate the successes and challenges faced this past year and the Virtual School's continued commitment to ensuring that we all fulfil our responsibilities to the children in our care so that they are given access to the opportunities available to maximise their attainment and achievement.

In March Middlesbrough's Children's Service underwent an ILACs inspection and our high aspirations for our children was recognised, "Virtual school leaders have high aspirations for all children who are looked after to achieve and lead healthy, happy lives. They know the needs of the children and young people well and want them to have the same support as they would have from a parent. Personal education plans (PEPs) are completed jointly by the school, PEP adviser, social worker and carer. They consider all aspects of the child's experience, and targets are captured effectively. The voice of the child is paramount to this."

We continue to champion our children in care with the aim being to narrow the gap between our children and their peers. The start of this new academic year was again characterised by making sure that our children do not have any missed learning opportunities. This remains one of our most significant priorities and we are working hard to improve attendance figures by sharing data, identifying issues and barriers and providing early intervention. Latest DfE figures reveal that nationally, post pandemic rates of attendance are not improving despite huge focus from schools, local authority officers and politicians; the attendance gap continues to grow.

I am confident with strong partnerships we can support our children to access high quality education to support each child and young person to achieve their full potential.

Executive summary

The corporate parenting responsibilities of local authorities include having a duty under section 22(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children they look after, including eligible children and those placed for adoption, regardless of whether they are placed in or out of authority or the type of placement. This includes the promotion of the child's physical, emotional and mental health and acting on any early signs of health issues.

The local authority ensures robust procedures are in place to monitor educational progress. This includes securing a culture of commitment to promoting the highest possible educational outcomes for children with a social worker. Achieving and implementing the above is monitored by the Virtual School Head (VSH), who is responsible for making sure their local authority promotes the educational achievement of its Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and from September 2021 all children with a social worker.

Over the 2022/23 academic year Middlesbrough Virtual School continued to go above and beyond in supporting our Looked After Children both inside and outside of the educational setting. This support varied broadly to ensure we met the needs of the children in our cohort, ranging from:

- Providing training and resources to schools and other settings
- Directly supporting children and young people
- Organising events and trips to encourage disadvantaged learners to make the most of their education.

The Virtual School works closely with teams and multi-agency partners to improve the life-chances of our Looked after Children. Working closely with the Leaving Care Teams to support young people transitioning from care and providing Attachment Aware training to Middlesbrough Schools. With a constantly changing cohort, as children enter and leave the care system, one year's cohort is often considerably different to the next.

Context of outcomes

Children in care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions and possibly elective home education. For those children coming into care late in their secondary school journey, many have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties which impact upon neurological development. It is well researched and evidenced that the fight, flight or freeze response leading to the child often being hyper-vigilant will negatively affect their ability to focus in a school environment, until they feel safe and secure.

This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning. Children Looked After will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel very different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem, which again can affect confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges.

A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs. Children Looked After also experience changes in fostering arrangements, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling.

This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre (The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Nov 2015).

The Virtual School Head's interim Outcomes Report captures attainment information for all looked after children alongside the qualifying cohort (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as 31st. March 2023 in line with the DfE's reporting methodology). The Virtual School actively supports every child in care regardless of duration in care.

There has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in England this summer, with grading protection in place to recognise the disruption that students have faced. This means that allowances have been made where national performance is weaker than before the pandemic. This has been part of a two-year, two-step plan to return to normal grading arrangements after the pandemic.

Students sitting GCSEs also received support in their exams this summer. In maths, physics, and combined science exams, students were given formulae and equation sheets, so there were fewer things to memorise for the exams. In GCSE modern foreign languages, the exams did not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary.

Grade boundaries typically change each exam series to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the assessments. This means that some grade boundaries are lower than 2019, while others are higher.
The PEP is a dynamic document that is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing needs and goals of the child.

It is an ongoing process that involves regular communication and collaboration between the Designated Teacher (DT), the Social Worker (SW) and other professionals involved in the child's care. The PEP provides a clear framework for identifying the educational needs and goals of each child and for developing a plan to meet those needs and goals.

Summary Outcomes

- In EYFS 40 % achieved GLD. This is a 13% increase from 21/22. Of the cohort 44% had SEND (6% having an EHCP).
- At KS1 18% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined
- At KS2, 32% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined
- At KS4, 16% achieved grade 4 in both English and maths, 29% achieved a grade 4 or above in English and 24% in maths.

Highlights of the Year

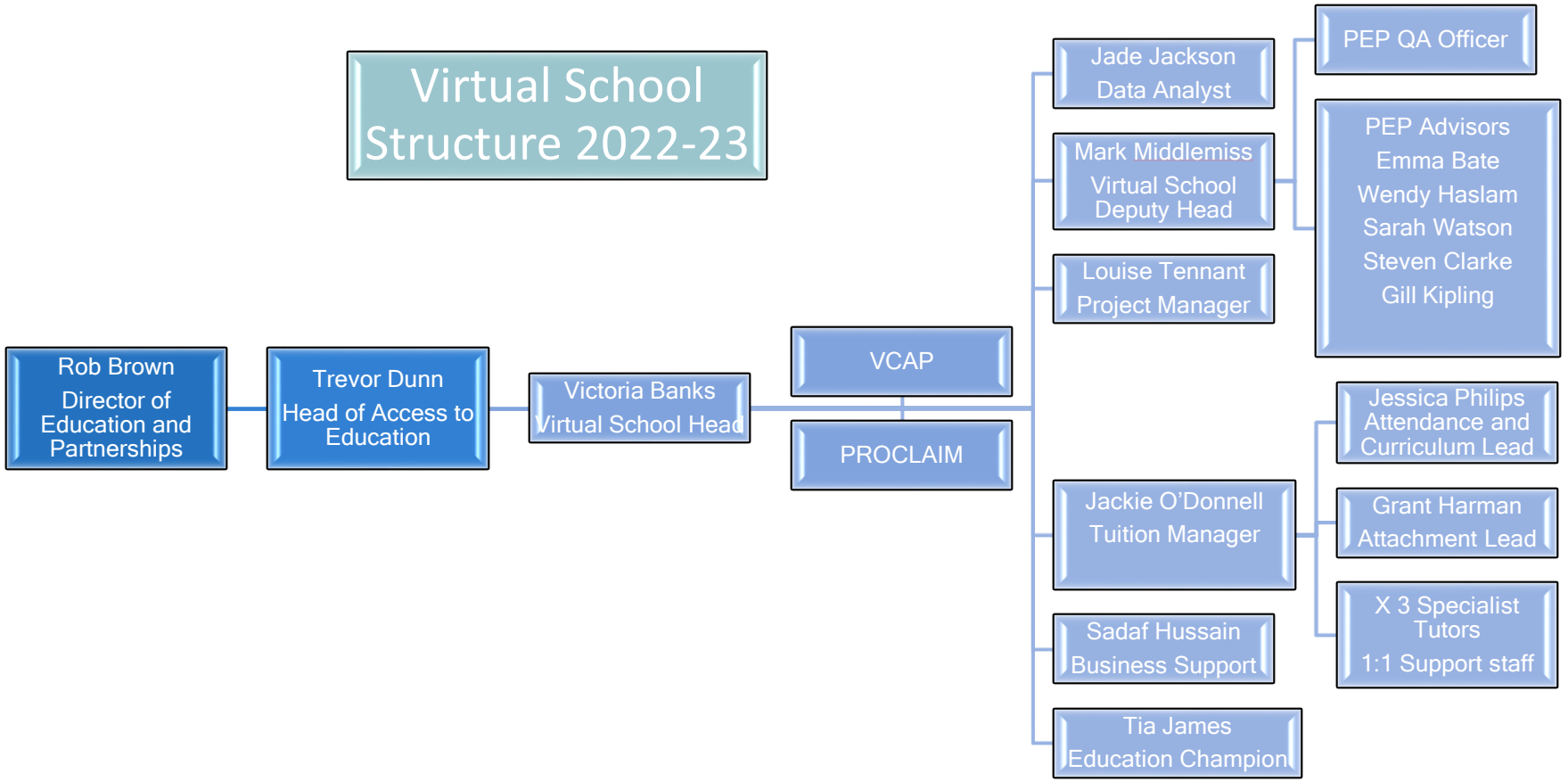
- Enrichment programme
- PROCLAIM: Providing Rich Opportunities for Children who are Looked After in Middlesbrough
- The Post 16 Pilot
- The Virtual School Annual Conference
- COVID catch-up project
- Comprehensive stakeholder training

Challenges of the year

- Fluidity in school and social worker workforce
- Increased demand on mental health and wellbeing services
- Increased town wide exclusions
- Covid 19 impact
- Care experienced young people not in Education, Training or Employment

Purpose and role of the Virtual School

The core purpose of the Virtual School in Middlesbrough is to raise the educational achievement of Children in Care, promote their emotional well-being and improve the life chances of a traditionally vulnerable group of young people. We support our Children in Care both inside and outside of the educational setting. This support varies broadly, ranging from: providing training and resources to schools, social care and other settings, directly supporting children and young people and organising events and trips in order to ensure our disadvantaged learners have the opportunity to make the most of their education.



Outside of school the Virtual School works with the wider children & families service, as well as external organisations to provide our Children in Care with the opportunities and experiences we would want for our own children. At the very heart of the Virtual School is the belief that children who enter care do so by no fault of their own, and that those working with them should strive to alleviate the adversity they have experienced – children should be empowered to achieve their goals and ambitions and given preferential treatment from the education settings they attend.

How the Virtual School supports and advocates for children and young people in our care:

- Providing direct educational support to children in care at school
- Ensuring the educational needs of children in care are well understood through ensuring children have an up-to-date detailed PEP
- Ensuring Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported appropriately
- Ensuring that the socio-emotional, mental and physical health needs of children in care are understood and supported
- Providing training to schools to enable them to better support the varying needs of our Children in Care across the full spectrum of education
- Monitoring the attendance, engagement and attainment of Children in Care in the educational environment and provide support where needed
- Supporting children attending out of area schools to ensure that they are receiving a level of education that we would expect for our own children
- Working with designated teachers and social workers to support admissions to schools and transitions from one school to another
- Supporting children in receipt of part-time provision into full-time provision by supporting the young people's underlying needs
- Working with education settings to reduce detentions, isolations and suspensions and prevent permanent exclusions from school
- Running projects and initiatives to give children in our care opportunities to develop themselves both personally and academically
- Raising the aspirations and encouraging ambition for children in our care
- Facilitating meetings to connect education, health and social care professionals to promote multi-agency support for children

Virtual School extended duties

Following the announcement in July 2021, the role of Virtual Schools within local authorities will be further extended from September 2021. Local authorities received funding to resource Virtual School Heads to work with schools, colleges and social care leaders to create a culture of high aspirations that helps all children with social workers to make educational progress.

The key aims of the duties are to:

- make visible the disadvantages that children with a social worker can experience, enhancing partnerships between education settings and local authorities to help all agencies hold high aspirations for these children.
- promote practice that supports children's engagement in education, recognising that attending an education setting can be an important factor in helping to keep children safe from harm.
- level up children's outcomes and narrow the attainment gap so every child can reach their potential. This will include helping to make sure that children with a social worker benefit from support to recover from the impact of COVID-19.

Key activities that will be critical to the success of the Virtual School Head role include;

- enhancing partnerships between education settings and the local authority so agencies can work together.
- identifying the needs of the cohort and addressing barriers to poor educational outcomes and ensure pupils make educational progress.
- offering advice and support to key professionals to help children make progress, including through increasing their confidence in using evidence-based interventions

Since September 2021 Middlesbrough has made good progress in meeting the aims of the extended duties. There has been a keen focus on attendance and awareness raising of children with a social worker.

Vulnerable children attendance project (VCAP)

It is widely recognised that education is a protective factor for many vulnerable children. If children are in school and engaged in education, they are not exposed to other risk factors.

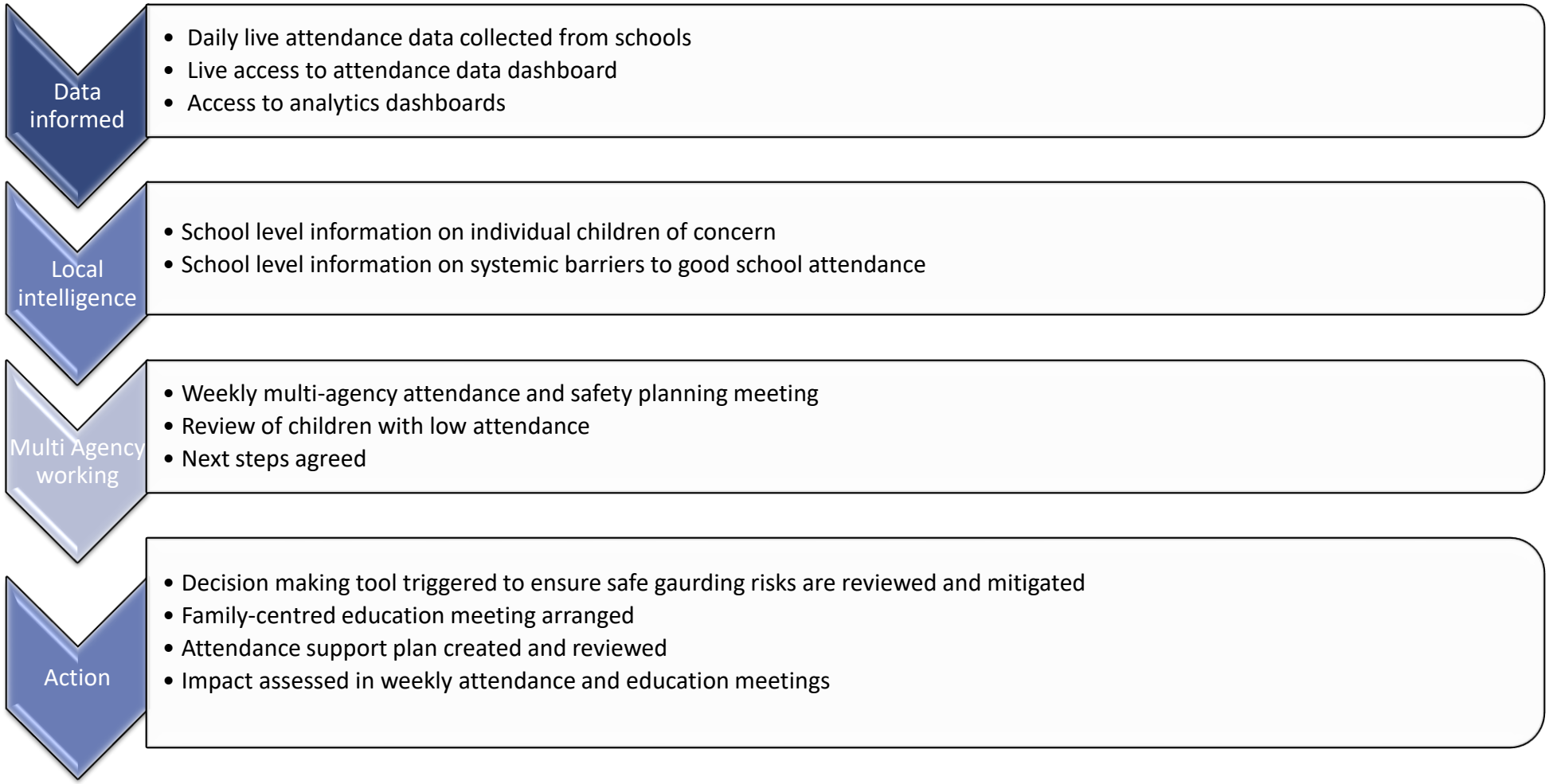
It is therefore important that the focus should be on preventative early interventions of poor school attendance and the use of reduced timetables is kept to a minimum and are only used as an exceptional measure.

Middlesbrough is committed to every child's right to enjoy a full-time education and makes clear the requirement where there is poor school attendance. VCAP ensures that high-quality data identifies children with a social worker who have poor attendance, and incorporates sector lead quantitative intelligence to inform multi-agency responses to improve school attendance.

VCAP aims to;

- raise attendance of Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan pupils
- identify children with a Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan with poor attendance
- ensure that no children with a Child Protection plan and Child in Need plan is excluded illegally through the imposition by a reduced timetable
- secure a more consistent approach that supports good school attendance and restricts the use of a reduced timetable for an extended period, as this can impair a pupil's progress and attainment
- ensure that a child's unmet needs are identified and addressed so that they may access their entitlement to full-time education.

VCAP model


Data informed
• Daily live attendance data collected from schools
• Live access to attendance data dashboard
• Access to analytics dashboards
Local intelligence
• School level information on individual children of concern
• School level information on systemic barriers to good school attendance
Multi Agency working
• Weekly multi-agency attendance and safety planning meeting
• Review of children with low attendance
• Next steps agreed
Action
• Decision making tool triggered to ensure safe gaurding risks are reviewed and mitigated
• Family-centred education meeting arranged
• Attendance support plan created and reviewed
• Impact assessed in weekly attendance and education meetings

The PROCLAIM: Providing Rich Opportunities for Children who are Looked After in Middlesbrough

Children in care and those with a social worker are disproportionately likely to have undergone traumatic experiences and/or to have had difficulty building positive relationships with adults. Evidence shows adverse experiences can negatively impact on their educational pathways and outcomes (Luke & O'Higgins, 2018). This project is developed to support school-wide practice designed to ameliorate these circumstances and support positive life outcomes.

There has been a growth in the use of attachment aware and trauma-informed (AATI) practice in schools. There is no specific formula for AATI schools, but by adopting policies and practices that emphasise emotional regulation, trust and positive relationships, drawing on academic research from educational psychology and neuroscience schools can become AATI in a way that fits with the wider school ethos and needs. Growing evidence suggests that AATI schools increase engagement, reduce the use of sanctions and have stronger learning outcomes.

PROCLAIM is a three year school programme designed to embed trauma-informed practice via a school-wide approach to increase skillsets and capacity of staff to support pupils. It involves the equivalent of a full day of training for all staff in the principles of the ARC (Attachment, Regulation, Competency). PROCLAIM aims to support the continuing professional develop of staff while also highlighting the importance on supporting staff well-being.

PROCLAIM approach requires the commitment of the senior leadership and the wider staff body to adopt a trauma-informed approach, and ensure a consistent and sustainable implementation of trauma-informed practice.

PROCLAIM requires a meaningful investment of resources; primarily time and training opportunities to support our schools through their individual journeys. Having a named person responsible for each school will develop sustained and creative relationships. The PROCLAIM team and school staff can then build positive trusting relationships to support effective systemic change in schools. Staff must feel able to discuss challenges and the strengths they wish to build upon, while the PROCLAIM team will be able to offer targeted support as they understand the reality faced by schools.

Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all Middlesbrough education settings are Attachment Aware and Trauma Informed in their practice, for the benefit of their whole learning communities, by 2025.

Mission

Our mission is to have a universal language of attachment and trauma across Middlesbrough, underpinned by training, supervision, support and challenge which will drive excellent outcomes for all children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

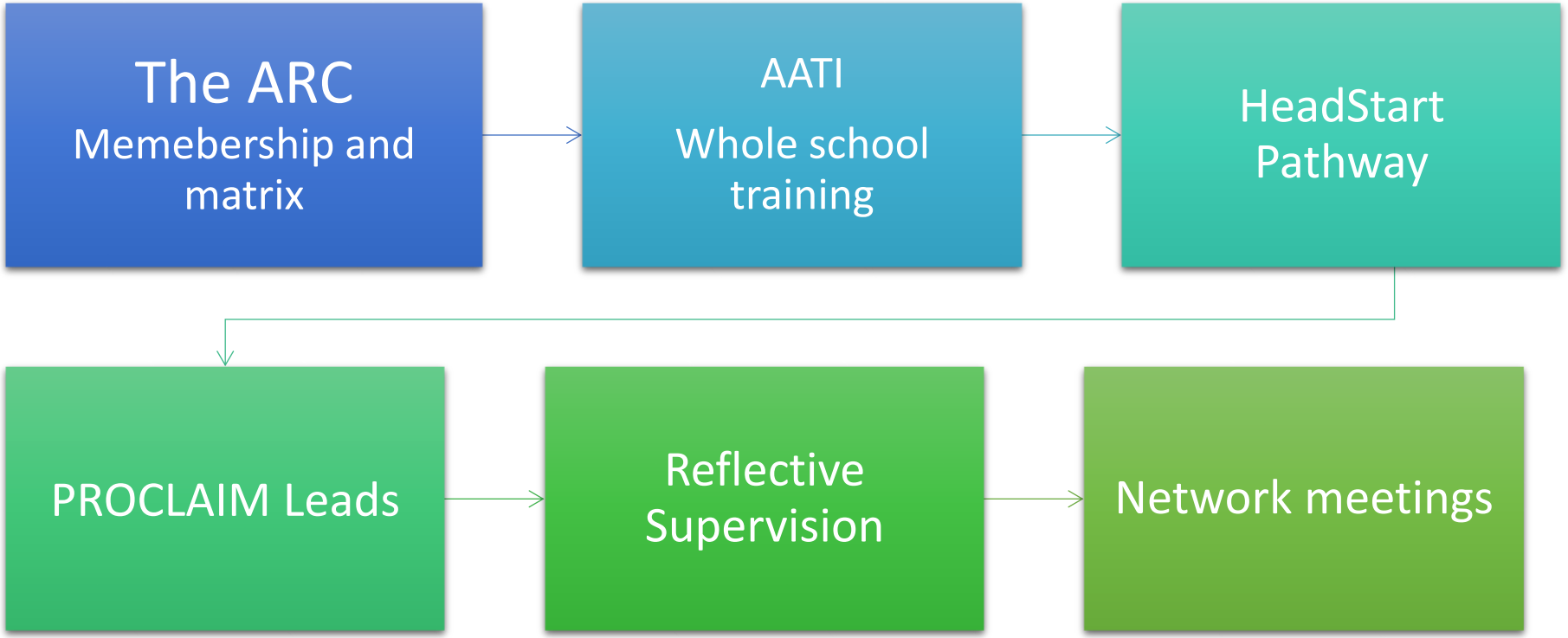
Purpose

Our purpose is to address the needs of children and young people in Middlesbrough. As professionals working in the fifth most deprived Local Authority area in England, with increasing levels of deprivation, we are acutely aware of the vulnerabilities experienced by many of our children, young people, families and communities. In education, we have witnessed further significant increases in children and young people requiring alternative provision, being referred for Education, Health and Care needs assessments, being persistently absent and being subject to the risk of permanent exclusion from our education settings.

The data, coupled with increases in children and young people requiring social care intervention, support from mental health services and the lasting impact of the global pandemic, highlights an ever growing need to provide environments that are rich in positive and nurturing relationships and one where our children and young people can achieve their potential, 'grow and prosper' (SEND strategy 2020-2024).

PROCLAIM

PROCLAIM: **6 Key Elements**



Collaborative Working

Middlesbrough Virtual School is committed to working in partnership with council services and external agencies, as well as our young people and their families. We believe in the principles of co-production and striving to operate within the co-production framework placing the voice of the child is at the centre of all we do. We regularly work with partner services and agencies across the Local Authority and wider areas to support and challenge schools to improve outcomes for our children and young people in care. This might be initiated through the PEP process or through direct contact with carers, Social Workers, Designated Teachers, Future for Families Hub, the SEN Team or the Admissions Team. The Virtual School team routinely attend key meetings such as multi-agency resource panels and colleagues' team meetings. The virtual school is represented on fostering panels, gaining a greater understanding of foster carers' training needs, and have been able to ensure that educational needs featured strongly in placement planning. During 2022-23 the Virtual School regularly attended and contributed to multi-agency, corporate, regional and national meetings including:

- A range of Social Care meetings including; Placements Panel, NEET Strategy Group, Risk Management Group, National Virtual Head meetings and joint working and training with colleagues in attendance and safety planning meetings
- A range of meeting with the SEND and Inclusion and admissions teams to support children who have the most complex needs.

"I just wanted to thank you for all the support both you and your colleagues have offered us as a virtual school. …Middlesbrough is always the most professional, supportive and positive experience."

"I'm so grateful for everything you have done … over the last couple of years. You do a brilliant job and your good at it … you say something if you think something is wrong or not working"

"Having a dedicated PEP adviser for each child within the virtual school enables a personal knowledge and understanding of the children which is valued. It also offers both support and professional challenge when needed. This is not a common model within other local virtual schools but is the most effective from a school perspective and really sets you apart."

School work force national context

The DfE's latest workforce data has shown that 39,930 teachers left the teaching profession in the 2021/2022 academic year for reasons other than retirement, which amounts to around 8.8 percent of teachers in the sector – this has increased from only 7,800 in the 2020/2021 academic year. The rate of teachers leaving due to retirement continued to decrease. The number of headteachers leaving for reasons other than retirement is also the highest since records began, with 1,694 leaving in 2021/2022 – this is up from 1,151 the year before and makes the third time since current records began that over 1,000 headteachers have quit the profession.

Also, 12.8 percent of early career teachers are leaving a year after qualifying and 19.9 percent are leaving two years after qualifying, compared to 12.5 percent and 17.3 percent respectively the year before. National secondary school vacancies are up by 12 percent this year, following a 28 percent rise between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, according to new survey data from Teacher Tapp and School Dash. Furthermore, 13 percent of secondary teachers responding to the survey reported unfilled vacancies in their school and 80 percent reported a decrease in applications compared to normal.

			2021/22
England		**Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence**	9.3
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	3,221,640
North East	**North East**	**Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence**	10.1
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	140,424
	Middlesbrough	**Average number of days taken by each teacher who took sickness absence**	11.2
		Total number of working days lost to sickness absence	11,934

Local context

In Middlesbrough the school workforce census notes good stability in senior leadership teams with only 3 teacher vacancies for all leadership posts within all Middlesbrough schools in 2021/22. Middlesbrough also continued to benefit from a lower pupil to teacher ratio compared to the rest of North East schools. However, it must be noted that the role of Designated Teacher for looked after children (DT-CLA) was significantly fluid throughout the academic year as in total, 43 schools have had at least one DT change. One school had 5 different DT's within the school year.

	No. of Schools with DT Changes (Mid'brough and beyond)	% of Schools with a Changes of DT
Primary Schools	14	32.6%
Secondary Schools	16	37.2%
Special Schools	13	30.2%

The role of the Designated Teacher

The role DT-CLA is demanding and one that when done well, will have the most significant impact of the outcomes of looked after children. The most effective Designated Teachers have a vital role in promoting the educational achievement of every Looked After Child and care experienced child on the school's roll. Schools and other settings must have a Designated Teacher, who is ideally a member of the senior leadership team with appropriate seniority and professional experience to provide leadership.

The Designated Teacher is responsible for championing the educational needs of looked after children and care experienced children in their school and, in the case of looked after children, play a key role in ensuring they have good quality PEPs.

It is imperative that Designated Teacher have training opportunities and sufficient time away from timetable commitments to fulfil their roll. This includes attending the Virtual Schools' Designated Teacher Training, which occurs half termly. The Designated Teacher should be the central point of contact regarding Looked After and Previously Looked After Children within the school. The Designated Teachers should also help raise awareness in the parents of Previously Looked After Children of the importance of making the school aware of their status so that they can offer the enhanced support they are entitled to.

The role of the Designated Teacher includes:

- ✓ Acting as an advocate for Looked After Children
- ✓ Taking the lead responsibility for helping school staff understand the difficulties affecting Looked After Children and how positive systems of support can help to overcome them.
- ✓ Promoting a culture of high expectation amongst all staff in the school and being a source of advice for staff.
- ✓ Making sure every young person has a voice in setting learning targets and ensuring their personal, emotional and academic needs are prioritised
- ✓ Developing and monitoring systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals and the Virtual School
- ✓ Supporting carers and communicating regularly with them
- ✓ Monitoring the educational progress, attainment and attendance of all Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children
- ✓ Leading on the development and implementation of each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and intervening if there is evidence of individual under-achievement or absence from school
- ✓ Liaising with the member of staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register, ensuring all Looked After Children in school are safeguarded

- ✓ Making sure that Looked After Children are prioritised in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home
- ✓ Feeding back to the governors at least once a year
- ✓ Encouraging a whole school culture by making sure that all staff:
    - Have high expectations and set targets to accelerate educational progress
    - Are aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation) from birth families (attachment and trauma awareness) and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their Adverse Childhood Experiences, and how this might affect the child's emotions and therefore their behaviour. (For more information see our Attachment Aware Schools section).
- ✓ The school's Designated Teacher for Looked After Children should be aware of the Pupil Premium Plus+ budget that the school receives and be able to demonstrate how effectively it has been utilized for each child. A summary, without the ability to identify individuals, will be visible on the school's website.

Increased demand on mental health and wellbeing services

Childhood and adolescence are critical stages of life for mental health. This is a time when rapid growth and development take place in the brain. Children and adolescents acquire cognitive and social-emotional skills that shape their future mental health and are important for assuming adult roles in society.
The quality of the environment where children and adolescents grow up shapes their well-being and development. Early negative experiences in homes, schools, or digital spaces, such as exposure to violence, the mental illness of a parent or other caregiver, bullying and poverty increase the risk of mental illness. The consequences of not addressing mental health and psychosocial development for children and adolescents extend to adulthood and limit opportunities for leading fulfilling lives.

Education is the most important modifiable social determinant of health. Research evidence shows that education and health are closely linked throughout the life course. Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically and levels of educational attainment in childhood are positively correlated with adult health behaviours, illness, life expectancy, employment and wealth. School is a key setting for forming or changing health behaviours.

The most recent data estimates for Children in Care show 46% have a diagnosable mental health disorder. In addition, all Looked After Children are likely to have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that are likely to require emotional support.

Children's wellbeing is influenced by a range of factors and includes their subjective feelings as well as social, physical and psychological aspects of their lives. National surveys show that prevalence rates for mental disorders are increasing. In 2017, one in nine children aged 5 to 16 years were identified as having a probable mental disorder and this had increased to one in six in 2020. The increase was evident in boys and girls.

Children in the North are more likely to live in poverty than those in the rest of England – and increasingly so. Poverty is the lead driver of inequalities between children in the North and their counterparts in the rest of the country, leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes, educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic productivity. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this situation worse. Although the full impact is not yet known, modelling suggests that, without intervention, the outlook is bleak. To address the North-South productivity gap we must tackle the stark inequalities.

Successfully attaining GCSEs is strongly associated with higher levels of life satisfaction among young people. A UK study published by the Department for Education (DfE) found that pupil wellbeing predicted their later academic progression and engagement in school. For example, pupils with better emotional wellbeing at age seven had a value-added key stage 2 score 2.46 points higher (equivalent to more than one term's progress) than pupils with poorer emotional wellbeing. It was also found that pupils with better attention skills also make more progress across the four key stages. For example, pupils with no attention issues at age 13 had a total value-added GCSE score that was equivalent to more than one extra GCSE. (63.38 points higher). A systematic review of coordinated school health programmes (that promote health through explicit teaching in the curriculum and broader work to promote a healthier school environment) suggests positive effects on attainment. There is extensive research to demonstrate that risk factors in children and young people's lives can be mitigated, either wholly or in part, by the introduction of protective factors that improve resilience. Risk is cumulative; the greater the number of adverse experiences and level of disadvantage experienced the more protective factors are required. Education settings play an essential role in promoting resilience, particularly for those pupils who have less supportive and secure home environments. Schools should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults about their problems. All schools are under a statutory duty to promote the welfare of their pupils, which includes preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes (DfE, Keeping Safe in Education Statutory Education).

South Tees had higher rates of SEMH with 4% in Redcar & Cleveland and 3.7% in Middlesbrough compared to 3.4% in England. Rates have increased both locally and nationally over recent years with the highest rates seen in 2022/23. The rates locally equate to 946 out of a total 25,858 pupils in Middlesbrough and 859 out of a total 21,330 pupils in Redcar & Cleveland in 2022/23. Evidence shows that children and young people from homes experiencing socio-economic disadvantage are more likely to experience emotional and mental ill-health. Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11) if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care. Middlesbrough has a much larger proportion of pupils in key stage 4 in 2022/23 who were classified as disadvantaged at 44.7% compared to England at 26.2%. Redcar & Cleveland's figure was slightly higher than England at 28.9%.

Nationally there is a greater proportion of boys who have SEMH compared to girls with 68.5% compared to 31.5%. The split is much greater for SEMH pupils compared to all SEN pupils. Locally there is a much greater proportion of boys who have SEMH compared to girls with 73.2% compared to 26.8%.

Wellbeing can be seen as a measure of positive mental health and a protective factor for young people, therefore Middlesbrough Local Authority has an established framework of quality assured providers who are able to offer a range of therapeutic services to children, young people and their families. All service areas refer directly to these services, with 258 looked after children in July 2023 accessing CAMHS or a commissioned therapeutic service to support with their emotional or mental health needs.

Across South Tees the iTHRIVE approach and framework is used to map and describe the children and young people's mental health system. The THRIVE Framework for system change (Wolpert et al, 2019) is an integrated, person centred and needs led approach to delivering mental health services for children, young people and their families.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust (TEWV) developed the single point of contact (SPOC). Children, young people, their families and schools have easy, streamlined access to the 'system' when they need help and receive the most appropriate support from the most appropriate service, based on their needs by referral into the SPOC. The aim is to have easy, streamlined access to services and reduce the burden on navigating a complex and complicated system. The SPOC comprises a team of TEWV, VCS providers and local authority representatives. This team aims to have a meaningful conversation with anyone who submits a referral in order to triage, assess where appropriate and discuss within the partnership the most appropriate service to support our young people.

All education settings across South Tees have access to whole school Getting Help mental health support. The Getting Help offer is a combination of service delivery by a strong local authority, voluntary and health sector partnership comprising: • Inside Out (MHST) • Getting Help VCS Collaborative • South Tees Public Health HeadStart • Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust.

Public Health South Tees HeadStart Service delivers a resilience curriculum across educational settings. An element of this is an accredited educational pathway called HeadStarters. HeadStarters is an incremental pathway that upskills pupils and students to become mental health champions within their setting, provide peer support and education, and harnesses the 'voice of a child' to design and deliver services. There are currently in excess of 2,500 HeadStarters from primary, secondary, special and post-16 settings across South Tees who have undertaken the pathway. The HeadStart service further provides primary to secondary transition support to all year 6 and 7 pupils in all schools across South Tees and a bespoke boys intervention.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education, particularly the most disadvantaged children. The term cultural capital is not new. It is a complex theory that comes originally from the field of sociology, which involves the study of society, including relationships, social interactions and culture. It is important to recognise that everyone has cultural capital – that is – knowledge, skills and behaviours, and that these accumulate over time through many different experiences and opportunities. Cultural capital is understood to contribute to 'getting on in life' or 'social status', i.e. being able to perform well in school, knowing how to talk in different social groups or societies, accessing higher education and being successful in work or a career. Children's experiences will be broadened through a wide range of opportunities.

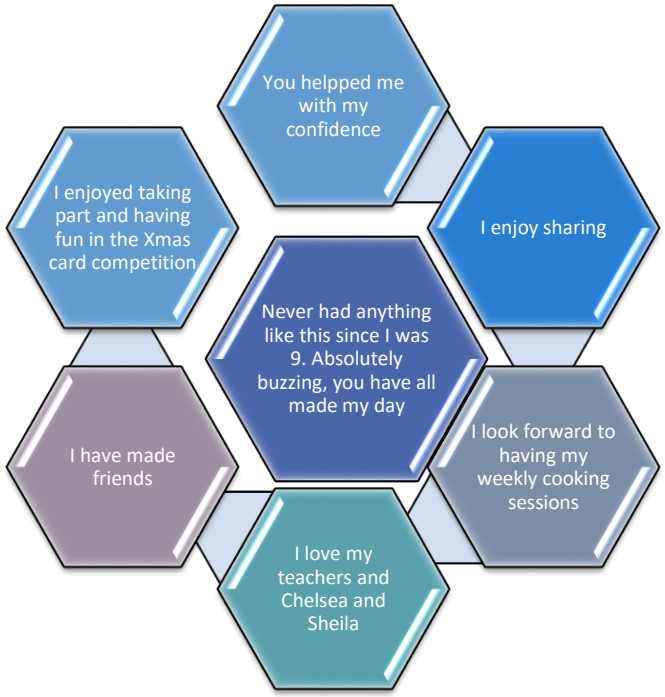
Encouraging and modelling language and vocabulary during play will help to build confidence and fluency, pretend and dramatic play which facilitates high-quality interactions will enable children to develop their language and ideas, to think critically, problem-solve and reflect ('sustained, shared thinking'). As well as creating opportunities to give positive comments that might be made about a young person. Children benefit from 'in-depth' learning experiences, i.e. time to become deeply involved and immersed in their activities, rather than just 'skimming the surface'. Short trips, visits or outings, e.g. to a nearby shop, park or city farm, help to deepen and enrich learning.

It is imperative that we acknowledge the challenges that children and young people growing up in care can face around socialisation, isolation, finances, stability, education, employment and training (EET) and their physical health and mental well-being. It imperative that there is a deep understanding how enrichment activities can increase cultural capital and can help to mitigate these challenges to enable children and young people who are looked after in whatever type of placement access a range of fun opportunities that support their ambitions, aspirations and personal development.

Virtual School Enrichment

The Virtua School has supported over 130 looked after children to access over 50 Enrichment opportunities.

Our young people told us…



I enjoyed going really fast

I enjoyed Horrible Histories at the theatre

I enjoyed beating Emma in the go-cart race

I enjoyed the planetarium

I enjoyed the Swan at Bowes Museum

I enjoyed not falling over

I enjoyed exploring

I enjoyed making pizza

I enjoyed going to the park

I enjoyed sliding down theI hill on my bum

I enjoyed lifting a leg up from the ice

I enjoyed going in the sea

I enjoyed learning about the medication in the 1880's chemist

I enjoyed being here and seeing staff

Key stake holder training delivered by the Virtual School

Specific support for looked after children is essential if they are to thrive. Looked after children are statistically more likely to have complex social or emotional needs as result of the trauma, abuse or neglect they have experienced. The professionals working with them need to have the skills and resources to meet their needs. If looked after children's needs are not met by the professionals working with them it can compound some children's feelings of exclusion or isolation and low self-esteem.

The Virtual School provides influential and pertinent advice and training to key partners working with looked after children. The Virtual School offers bespoke 1:1 training alongside some small group sessions for key stake holders. Last year the Virtual School Team delivered over 35 personalised sessions. The Virtual School provided formal training events for professionals to support the education of looked after and previously looked-after children. All training events were provided for free and delivered both face to and remotely

Designated Teacher Training

The Children & Young Persons Act 2008 places a duty on school governing bodies "to designate a member of staff (the designated teacher) as having the responsibility to promote the educational achievement of CLA, including those aged between 16 and 18 who are registered pupils at the school".
The designated teacher really is a key role in schools, here are a few of their key responsibilities:

- Helping to ensure that other school staff are aware of the individual needs of looked-after pupils (while maintaining appropriate confidentiality) and promoting high aspirations.
- Tracking the attendance, attainment and progress of their looked-after pupils.
- Putting together the PEP that all CLA should have, in partnership with the child, their carer and their social worker.
- Providing a consistent source of support to the child. That consistency alone can be invaluable. If things turn chaotic for the child, and other key adults in their life do change, school can provide the lifeline of a regular, reassuring voice.

Considering its importance, it is vital that the right member of staff is appointed to this role. They should have sufficient seniority to influence policy and practice where necessary, and to promote a positive and supportive ethos throughout the whole school. Given the nuances alluded to in the points above, it is also clear that they will need the right blend of experience, skills and personal qualities to make it work. There's a requirement for both strength and subtlety.

There will be variations in the position and make-up of that "ideal" person, of course, depending on the individual school. However, this shouldn't just be viewed as an additional add-on. There is a statutory requirement for designated teachers to keep up-to-date with appropriate training and they will need on-going support and supervision to help them manage the challenges of the role.

Designated teachers need to establish very strong and well-organised channels of communication, both internally and with external agencies. They have a role in ensuring, that their school's data-sharing protocols are robust and fit-for-purpose. They will need to know what to share, what not to share, and how to communicate it safely and securely. By ensuring that looked-after pupils have a high-quality education plan, for example, the designated teacher is not only helping to keep them on track, they are building a comprehensive source of pupil-level data. If the child does move schools unexpectedly, this information can be invaluable to their new setting. The Virtual School Middlesbrough ensures that all training is targeted by analysing the information provided on training and developing needs in EPEP.

To support our Designated Teachers in carry out their duties the Virtual School has provided the following training this year;

Annual programme				
Date and Time of Training	Name of training & where the training will be held	Overview	Name of Trainer	Number of delegates attended
07/12/2022 3:30pm – 5pm	Creative Ways to use Pupil Premium Plus Teams	This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs, and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	54
01/02/2023 4pm – 5pm	Creative use of PP+	This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	61
08/03/2023 4pm – 5pm	Supporting EYFS & Primary Inclusion Launchpad Literacy	How the Local Authority outreach and inclusion service can support you with early identification of need and a graduated approach to supporting Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the Early Years Launchpad for Literacy has evolved from real-life issues and concerns in response to the challenges of practitioners and children. It will support you in delivering a whole school approach to the teaching literacy and phonics.	Georgina Camsell Wendy Haslam	45

25/04/2023 10am – 11 am	DT and finance joint workshop: PPP payments Thorntree Hub TS3 9JW	To support the communication of Pupil Premium Plus payment schedules to schools, the Virtual School Head would like to invite you to attend the Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus workshop, where we will explore the Pupil Premium Plus policy in detail and respond to any questions that arise.	Victoria Banks	35
17/05/2023	Creative use of PP+ TEAMS	Our third and final session. This training session is focused on thinking creatively about how we can use Pupil Premium Plus to genuinely support children and young people, consider their unmet needs and impact their learning. The session will provide an opportunity to reflect on current practice and consider whether there are alternative ways to respond to learning needs rather than some of the more traditional responses that tend to be commonplace.	Rezina Kelly	63
23/05/2023	How DTs can support pupils who are NEET TEAMS	A Workshop addressing the issues around Young People who are NEET. Practitioners have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges before developing solutions based on the latest research.	Jack Newton	54
08/06/2023	Emotionally Based School Avoidance (Assessment and Intervention with CYP, Schools and Families) TEAMs	Through this follow up webinar to the Middlesbrough VS Conference, Dr Jerricah Holder will present a number of CYP-friendly tools and assessment techniques to support Designated Teachers to keep the CYP voice at the centre of assessment and intervention. Evidence-based strategies at the level of the child, home and school context will be explored alongside environmental and systemic barriers to school attendance and wellbeing.	Dr Jerricah Holder	63

21/06/2021	The impact of trauma	This session will explore what trauma is and how we can recognise that a child or young person may be traumatised. The impact of trauma on a child or young person and how this can link to presenting behaviours will be considered. We will outline strategies for dealing with and minimising the impact of trauma within the school environment.	Dr Lowe	62
11th July 2023 4pm – 5pm	Child centred PEPs /PP+/SMART Targets Teams	•By the end of the session you will: •Understand what child centred means •Understand what a SMART target is •Be able to create SMART targets and PEPs that are child centred •Know the difference between PP and PP+ and how to record PP+ spend on the epep. •Know how to track PP+ spend. •Know how to quality assure your own PEPs.	Wendy Haslam	53
19th July 2023 4pm – 5pm	Attachment theory and children's learning in school. Teams	Attachment theory and implications in the classroom. Looked After Children may not have formed secure attachments with adults in their early years and can exhibit a variety of behaviours at school and in their wider life. If not recognised, it can lead to exclusion and educational underperformance. Attachment theory is based on the pattern of relationships between infants and primary carers. There is now a greater understanding of the influence of these very early relationships on later development. Evidence has emerged which links attachment style directly to expectations and responses in school and it is a useful lens to view behaviour difficulties.	Sarah Watson	61

The Virtual School Annual Conference: Language that Cares

It was a delight that Middlesbrough Virtual School was able to hold the 4th annual conference gathering over 350 key stakeholders including schools, foster carers, children's services and health professionals to learn, discuss thoughts, network, share ideas, create new ideas, and to ignite motivation to better support children with a social worker. The aim of the conference was to expand professional and personal development and provided insightful information delivered by an array of national and international pioneering Keynote speakers. The event was supported by all Directors and Head of Service with Middlesbrough's Director of Education, Rob Brown, comparing the event.

Mary-Anne Hodds a care experienced teacher, trainer, and advisor combines her lived experience and psychology to support delegates deeper understanding of and improved outcomes for children and young people in care. Mary-Anne addressed themes of connection, identity, and strengths-based, therapeutic care, on subjects such as language, recordings, childhood trauma, transitions, the care journey and more.

Followed by **Mick Simpson** the Headteacher of Olsen House School, a school specialising in SEMH, ASC, ASHD and LS for young people aged 7 – 16 years old. He has been a teacher for over 30 years and has spent his entire career serving schools in challenging circumstances. Mick spoke to professionals of the benefits of non-confrontational behaviour management theory and techniques.

Within **Karen May's** keynote she focussed on the importance of language. With Karen we reflected on practice asking; What if we shifted language from 'special needs' to 'needs more understanding' or 'unacceptable behaviour' to 'understandable behaviour'? Exploring the evidence that when young people feel accepted and valued it leads to better social, emotional and mental wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Dr Jerricah Holder is an experienced Educational Psychologist, trainer and author of the School Wellbeing Cards. Jerricah spoke to delegates about a compassionate and child-centred approach to understanding and addressing barriers to attendance and school wellbeing.

Jerricha's shared some of her extensive experience of working with individual children and their family and school settings to increase resilience in school attendance, as well as developing more systemic approaches to Emotional Based School Avoidance shifting the focus onto early identification and intervention.

With 6 workshops to choose from delegate had the opportunity to choose two sessions that related best to their area of development and practice.

Joe Russo – Challenging perceptions

Liza Lomax - Kick Ass

Karen May – Relational Practices and the Importance of Language

Mick – AATI schools

Tia James – Middlesbrough Care experienced Young Person

Julie O'Connor- Restorative Practice

Middlesbrough's Virtual School Head, Victoria Banks, motivated delegates to become education Champions for children with a social worker. Victoria led the call to action by asking all delegates to become an Education Champion for children with a social worker by;

- ✓ Raising awareness for CWSW
- ✓ Challenging stenotypes of CWSW
- ✓ Advocate for CWSW as part of their daily practice
- ✓ Hold high aspirations for CWSW
- ✓ Ensure CWSW meet their potential
- ✓ Remove education barriers for CWSW

Over 200 delegates became Education Champions for children with a social worker.

Virtual School PEP Advisors

The delivery of high-quality PEPs is a crucial priority of the Virtual School Middlesbrough. A Virtual School PEP Advisor will arrange a minimum of 3 Personal Education Plan meetings throughout the academic year. When a young person's needs change or there has been a significant event in their life, the Virtual School is contacted to convene a PEP review meeting to ensure that the plan remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of the young person.

The role of a PEP Advisor is to:

- Drive a high quality education plan in conjunction with the young person's social worker, carer, Designated Teacher and the young person themselves
- ensure that all statutory requirements of the PEP are met
- give educational advice and guidance to Designated Teachers, social workers and carers
- signpost to other sectors and professionals where needed
- guarantee that the young person’s voice is heard
- hold the school accountable for raising aspirations for looked after children and young people

It is important that the PEP is an accurate, detailed, living and useful document that is easily understood by carers, any school which subsequently receives it most importantly the young person.

Schools, other professionals and carers noted that they value the expert support and challenge from the Virtual School team who have high levels of credibility. The Virtual School team are well equipped to challenge key partners when necessary. Their powerful advocacy for children is underpinned by professional credibility and access to quality data. The Virtual School Head is well supported by the senior leadership team in accessing exceptional resources and fast-tracking systems to ensure children get the right support at the right time.

PEP Compliance and Quality

All looked-after children must have a care plan, of which the PEP is an integral part. The PEP (pre-school, to age 18) should be initiated as part of the care plan. It is an evolving record of what needs to happen for looked-after children to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. The PEP should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the child's identified educational needs, raises aspirations and builds life chances. The school, other professionals and the child's carers should use the PEP to support achieving those things.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. Virtual School, social workers, carers, designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals work closely together to ensure every pep meets the quality assurance criteria.

PEP Quality Assurance

Middlesbrough PEPs go through a number of Quality Assurance (QA) processes. There are a number of set activities carried out to ensure PEPs are of a good quality to ensure the PEP reflects the learning needs of each child.

Each PEP is initially audited by the social worker and the Designated Teacher. When both parties are assured the PEP is of good quality they notify the Virtual School PEP Advisor via the online EPEP system. The Virtual School PEP Advisor then applies the QA grade descriptors before giving an overall grade of either Gold, Green, Amber or Red.

Gold standard is awarded where a PEP is of the highest quality and details compressively areas of strength and development. The PEP has clear targets that will drive progress for the child and clearly supports the high aspirations. It will have met all statutory requirements and will encompass best practice.
Green standard is awarded where a PEP has met all statutory requirements, encompasses best practice and evidence high aspirations for looked after children and young people.

Amber is awarded to PEPs that need amending and improving, but do meet statutory requirements and should be corrected within 10 school days.
Red is awarded to PEPs that do not meet statutory requirements. Where a red grade is awarded, the Designated Teacher and social worker are contacted, and required to hold another meeting to produce a PEP document of a higher standard.

During the academic year over 1,500 PEPs were completed. PEP Advisors acted as a critical friend to partners giving supportive feedback on PEP improvements. Each month 20 PEPs are quality assured and at the end of the academic year a minimum of 10% of PEPs are benchmarked. It was found that 97% of PEPS were of at least adequate quality and 60% of PEPs were of good or better quality.

Improving the quality of PEPs

Middlesbrough Virtual School recognise that high quality PEPs are instrumental in supporting looked after children to thrive in school and to go on to live successfully in adulthood. Through robust quality assurance processes it has been identified that PEP targets are often not measurable or time bound. There has however been a good improvement in specificity of targets.

Attendance is well tracked, monitored and reported in the PEP. In order to improve quality further, where a student has below 95% clear multi-agency plans to improve should be detailed in the PEP.

Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs are a type of special educational need in which children/young people have severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour. They often show inappropriate responses and feelings to situations. It is important that we demonstrate professional curiosity within PEPs to identify and address SEMH needs early.

It is recommended that in the coming year the following areas are addressed to further improve PEP quality:

- Training delivered to Designated Teachers (DTs) and all other relevant stakeholders around with a keen focus on SMART Targets and their link to PP+ spend, attendance and identifying early sighs of SEMH.
- PEP advisors to ensure IAG is given during PEP meetings with regards to SMART targets and their link to PPP spend, attendance and identifying early sighs of SEMH.
- Ensure there is explicit and robust feedback on the PEP with a strong focus on;
    i. SMART targets and their link to PP+ spend
    ii. Attendance
    iii. SEMH and SEND
- Robust challenge should be given after the PEP meeting and before the 10 day QA deadline to enable DTs to sharpen targets.

- PEP Advisors further draw attention to specific/potential areas for targets, reinforcing Pupil Voice and attendance as these areas are often overlooked.

- Create a bespoke series of training for stakeholders that supports the creative use of PP+.

- PAs to facilitate high-quality discussions with DTs, carers and social workers so that their views reflect strengths and weaknesses regarding the child's education.

- The PEP QA officer ensures that all relevant SEND and Health documentation is uploaded to WFC.

- Training to be delivered on the meaningful collection and implementation of child's voice.

Exclusions and Suspensions

Permanent Exclusion

Permanent exclusion is the most serious sanction a school can give if a child does something that is against the school's behaviour policy (the school rules). It means that the child is no longer allowed to attend the school and their name will be removed from the school roll (unless the exclusion is overturned). For the purpose of this report the data only includes permanent exclusions which have been upheld by the governing body or Independent Review Panel (IRP), and not those which are still ongoing.

Exclusions must be for disciplinary reasons only. All schools must have a behaviour policy setting out what the school rules are and this must be published on the school website. Schools vary in what they will permanently exclude for. However permanent exclusion should only happen:

- in response to a serious one-off breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy and
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school
- In practice this means that there are two likely scenarios for a permanent exclusion
- The student has had a history of persistent disruptive behaviour and the school feel they cannot do anymore.
- The student has committed a single serious one-off offence, even if they have never been in trouble before.

However, it is up to each school to define what counts as a serious offence.

Suspensions

Suspensions, previously known as 'fixed period exclusions', refers to when a pupil who is excluded from a school for a set period of time. A suspension can involve a part of the school day and it does not have to be for a continuous period. A pupil may be suspended for one or more periods up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. This total includes suspensions from previous schools covered by the exclusion legislation.

National Context

From 2012/13, there was a general decline in permanent exclusions, reaching a low point during this period however there has been a subsequent Increase in recent years.

Data Table

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 100 pupils)
2019/20	5,100	0.06
2020/21	5,800	0.07
2021/22	6,500	0.07

In 2019/20 there were relatively lower numbers of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. However, in 2020/21 there was a slight increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise. In 2021/22 the trend continued upward, reflecting ongoing behavioural challenges and possibly the long-term impacts of the pandemic on student behaviour and school dynamics.

The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions over the three-year period, with the rate per 100 pupils remaining consistent at 0.07 in the last two years. The Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened. The rising numbers suggest persistent or growing behavioural issues among students, necessitating enhanced support and interventions.

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Looked After Children data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for looked after children over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year.

National CLA Exclusions

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 1,000 pupils)
2019/20	1,200	78
2020/21	1,400	85
2021/22	1,600	97

In 2019/20: there was a relatively lower number of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. 2020/21 shows increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise and in 2021/22 the trend continued upward, reflecting ongoing behavioural challenges and possibly the long-term impacts of the pandemic on student behaviour and school dynamics.

Overall Increase: The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for looked after children over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year. Again, the Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened.

Local Context

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Middlesbrough has increased overall. The data shows a steady increase in permanent exclusions for Middlesbrough over the three-year period, with the rate per 1,000 pupils rising each year. The Pandemic likely played a significant role in the fluctuations observed, with initial decreases due to school closures followed by increases as schools reopened.

Three-Year Trend in Permanent Exclusions for Middlesbrough

Academic Year	Permanent Exclusions	Rate (per 1,000 pupils)
2019/20	45	1.2
2020/21	50	1.3
2021/22	52	1.4

In 2019/20 had a relatively lower number of exclusions, possibly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures and remote learning periods. In 2020/21 there was a slight increase in exclusions as schools began to reopen and return to in-person learning. The challenges of transitioning back to the classroom environment may have contributed to this rise and again by 2021/22 the trend of exclusions for all Middlesbrough children is increasing.

Both the Northeast and statistical neighbours show a positive trend with decreasing exclusions over the three years. Middlesbrough maintains no exclusion for looked after children.

Looked After children exclusion baseline comparatives.

Area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Middlesbrough	0	0	0
North East	5	4	3
Statistical Neighbours	7	6	5

Similar to the Northeast, statistical neighbours also show a decreasing trend in exclusions. This consistent reduction suggests effective interventions and support systems are in place. Middlesbrough had no exclusions for looked after children between 2019/20 and 2021/22, this suggests that efforts to support looked after children and prevent exclusions are having a positive impact on a backdrop of increased exclusions for their non-looked after peers. Continued focus on these support systems must be maintained to ensure we continue to drive down exclusions and improve educational outcomes for looked after children.

End of Key stage outcomes

Children in Care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions and possibly elective home education. For those children coming into care late in their secondary school journey many have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties which impact upon neurological development. It is well researched and evidenced that the fight, flight or freeze response leading to the child often being hyper- vigilant will negatively affect their ability to focus in a school environment, until they feel safe and secure. This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning. Children Looked After will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel very different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem, which again can affect confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges. A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs. Children Looked After also experience changes in fostering arrangements, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling. This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre (The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Nov 2015). The Virtual School Head's interim Outcomes Report captures attainment information for all looked after children alongside the qualifying cohort (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as 31st. March 2023 in line with the DfE's reporting methodology). The Virtual School actively supports every child in care regardless of duration in care.

There has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in England this summer, with grading protection in place to recognise the disruption that students have faced. This means that allowances have been made where national performance is weaker than before the pandemic. This has been part of a two-year, two-step plan to return to normal grading arrangements after the pandemic.

Students sitting GCSEs also received support in their exams this summer. In maths, physics, and combined science exams, students were given formulae and equation sheets, so there were fewer things to memorise for the exams. In GCSE modern foreign languages, the exams did not have to test unfamiliar vocabulary.

Grade boundaries typically change each exam series to reflect any differences in the difficulty of the assessments. This means that some grade boundaries are lower than 2019, while others are higher.

Summary Outcomes

As the new framework to attain GLD is embedding, year on year comparisons should be drawn with caution. In EYFS there were 18 children in the qualifying cohort and 40 % achieved GLD. This is a 13% increase from 21/22. Of the cohort 44% had SEND (6% having an EHCP).

- There were 11 children in the qualifying cohort at KS1 and 18% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined, 46% achieved the expected standard in Reading, 18% achieved the expected standard in Writing. Three children in this cohort were working at Pre-Key Stage Standards and consequently did not meet EXS in any area. Two of these had an EHCP and are at special schools. One has SEN Support and is at a mainstream school.

- There were 18 children in the qualifying cohort at KS2, 32% achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing, Maths Combined, 52% achieved the expected standard in Reading, 49% achieved the expected standard in Writing and 52% achieved the expected standard in Maths. Of the overall cohort 56% had SEND (26% with an EHCP). Three children with an EHCP were disapplied – two now attend a special school.

- At KS4 there were 38 children in the qualify cohort, 16% of those students achieved grade 4s in both English and Maths, 29% achieved a grade 4 or above in English and 24% in maths.

End of Key Stage Summary

	All National 2022	Total CLA Middlesbrough 2019 %	CLA 12M+ Middlesbrough 2019 %	CLA 12m+ Middlesbrough 2022 %	Total CLA Middlesbrough 2023 %	CLA 12m+ Middlesbrough 2023 %
Early Years GLD	40	40 (25)	**45 (11)**	**27**	39 (7)	**40 (4)**
KS1 R/W/M	29	48 (27)	**37 (16)**	**38**	28 (5)	**18 (2)**
KS1 Reading	40	59 (27)	**50 (16)**	**63**	50 (9)	**46 (5)**
KS1 Writing	34	55 (27)	**43 (16)**	**50**	33 (6)	**18 (2)**
KS1 Maths	44	55 (27)	**50 (16)**	**56**	44 (8)	**36 (4)**
KS2 R/W/M	32	48 (27)	**45 (20)**	**32**	44 (10)	**39 (7)**

KS2 Reading	52	74 (27)	**75 (20)**	**52**	48 (11)	**44 (8)**
KS2 Writing	43	70 (27)	**70 (20)**	**49**	52 (12)	**50 (9)**
KS2 Maths	45	63 (27)	**55 (20)**	**52**	52 (12)	**50 (9)**
KS4 Basics 4+	-	-	**11**	**18**	12 (6)	**16 (6)**
KS4 MATHS 4+	-	-	**22**	**21**	21 (10)	**24 (9)**
KS4 ENGLISH 4+	-	-	**30**	**30**	23 (11)	**29 (6)**

Pupil Premium Plus Policy

The pupil premium plus grant (PPP) was set at £2,345 per pupil for the financial year.

Middlesbrough Virtual School provides a wide range of services to schools to support looked after children, including advice and guidance, management of the PEP process and associated quality assurance, exclusion support, advocacy, in class TA and teacher support, one to one teaching support alongside key stakeholder training.

These services cannot be provided without the top slicing amount. The remaining amount is paid direct to schools.

The devolved portion of funding to school is £1,000 (£333 per term).
If schools have effectively mapped the £666 Pupil Premium Plus from the previous two terms within the PEP, the spring payment of £333 is released to school in May.

Schools can ask for additional funding where there is evidence that the £1,000 has been used to support the academic attainment of the students and further funding is needed to ensure students have access to the correct support and interventions.

Almost half the PP+ funding (47%) was devolved to schools. This year there has been a significant increase of PPP required to support the mental health and wellbeing of our students.

Cost	*PPP %*
Staffing	25
COVID recovery	7
Intervention Centre	9
Top UP PPP to Schools	9
Devolved PPP to Schools	31
Enrichment	1
EP Time 14 days a year	1
Professional commission & membership fees	1
Training, books & publications	1
Office expenses	0.3
Laptops	0.7
Mental health support	5
Celebration awards	4
Welfare Call	4
Post Looked After: ATV	1
Total	100

Middlesbrough Virtual School

Annual Report

Academic Year: 2023–2024

Prepared by:

Victoria Banks
Virtual School Head
Date: April 2025

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1. Executive Summary

Overview of the Virtual School's strategic priorities

1. Enhance CWSW visibility, improve workforce skills and ensure effective PEPs for Children Looked After.
2. Build strong service links, prioritise mental health support and conduct tailored training programmes.
3. Partner with experts, collaborate with social care and schools and establish mental health partnerships.
4. Focus on equity, use data for improvement and implement evidence-based interventions for better outcomes.

Headline successes and challenges from the academic year

1. Middlesbrough's Children Looked After Cohort Grows by 3% in 2024, with Significant Increase in Post-16 Group

2. Shift in Educational Placements: More Middlesbrough Children Looked After Educated Out of Borough in 2024

3. Diversity Increases Among Middlesbrough's Children Looked After, Highlighting Need for Culturally Responsive Support

4. Middlesbrough's Children Looked After Achieve 86.75% Attendance Rate in 2023-2024

5. Primary Education Shines with High Attendance Rates Among Middlesbrough's Children Looked After

6. Targeted Interventions Needed for Secondary Education Attendance in Middlesbrough's Children Looked After

7. Middlesbrough's Virtual School Achieves Seven Years with No Permanent Exclusions for Children Looked After

8. High Suspension Rates in KS3 and KS4 Highlight Need for Targeted Interventions in Middlesbrough

9. Gender Disparity in Suspensions: 55.8% of Suspended Children Looked After in Middlesbrough are Female

10. Stable SEND Proportion Among Middlesbrough's Children Looked After, Slight Increase in Post-16 Support

11. Early Intervention Strategies Lead to Decrease in SEND Identification in Early Years for Middlesbrough CLA

12. Ongoing Challenges in Secondary Education: High SEND Rates in Years 9 and 11 for Middlesbrough CLA
13. Middlesbrough's Virtual School Annual Conference Inspires Professionals with Strategies to Support Care-Experienced Young People
14. Middlesbrough school-aged Children Looked After are placed across 147 settings, with 89.1% rated as Good or Outstanding.
15. Only 1.4% of school settings for Middlesbrough Children Looked After are rated as Inadequate or having Serious Weaknesses.
16. 48.7% of school-aged Children Looked After are in short-term fostering, which may indicate higher instability.
17. 69.1% of Children Looked After have had only one placement in the last 12 months, suggesting recent stability for the majority.
18. 11.6% of Children Looked After have had 10 or more placements, indicating significant disruption for this group.
19. 46.7% of Children Looked After have been in their current placement for less than 12 months, while 21.5% have been in their placement for over 3 years.
20. The Middlesbrough's Children Looked After cohort has grown larger, with increased diversity and a significant rise in the post-16 group.
21. While primary education attendance rates are high, secondary education faces challenges, including high suspension rates and ongoing SEND issues.
22. Stability in placements varies, with a notable portion experiencing frequent moves, impacting their overall stability and educational continuity.

End of Key Stage Outcomes

Summary of Educational Outcomes for Middlesbrough Children Looked After

The educational outcomes for Middlesbrough Children Looked After show a mixed picture across different stages of their education.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):

- Middlesbrough Children Looked After face significant challenges in the early years, with only 22.2% achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD). Literacy is a particular area of concern, with only 22.2% meeting expected goals. However, there is a notable strength in the area of Understanding the World, where 55.6% of children achieve expected goals.

Key Stage 2 (KS2):

- In reading, only 31.3% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After meet the expected standards, which is below national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages.
- Maths is a relative strength, with 50% of children meeting the expected standards, surpassing national and regional averages.
- Writing performance is mixed; while fewer children meet the expected standard, those who do often achieve at a greater depth.

Key Stage 4 (KS4):

- Middlesbrough Children Looked After perform relatively well compared to their peers nationally and regionally, with a Progress 8 score of -0.83, which is better than the national, regional, and statistical neighbours' scores.
- Their Attainment 8 score of 21.3 is higher than the national average but still significantly lower than the local authority average.
- EBacc entry and performance show mixed results, with some areas of strength but overall lower coverage compared to the local authority.

Overall, while there are areas of strength, particularly in maths and some aspects of KS4 performance, Middlesbrough Children Looked After generally face significant challenges, especially in literacy and early years development. Focused efforts on improving literacy and providing targeted support throughout their education are essential to help these children achieve their full potential

2. Context and Cohort

Local Context of Middlesbrough

Demographic Overview

Middlesbrough, located in the Tees Valley region of North East England, has a population of approximately 140,000 residents. The town is characterized by a relatively young demographic, with a significant proportion of the population under the age of 30. While the majority of the population is White British, there are growing communities of Asian, Black, and other ethnic minorities. Economically, Middlesbrough faces higher than average levels of deprivation, with many residents living in areas classified among the most deprived in the country.

Specific Challenges and Opportunities for Children Looked After (CLA)

Middlesbrough presents several challenges and opportunities for Children Looked After (CLA).

One of the primary challenges is educational attainment. Historically, Middlesbrough has struggled with lower educational attainment levels compared to national averages. This issue is particularly pronounced among CLA, who often face additional barriers to academic success. However, there are opportunities to address this challenge through initiatives such as the Virtual School, which aims to provide targeted support to improve educational outcomes for CLA.

Health and wellbeing is another area of concern. Children Looked After in Middlesbrough experience higher rates of mental health issues and lower overall wellbeing. Access to healthcare services can be inconsistent, posing further challenges. To address these issues, programs focused on mental health support and wellbeing initiatives are being developed.

Economic opportunities in Middlesbrough are limited, with higher unemployment rates impacting the future prospects of CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER as they transition to adulthood. However, local government and organizations are working on economic development plans to create more job opportunities and vocational training programs, which could benefit CLA.

Social care and support services in Middlesbrough face high demand, with resource constraints affecting the quality and consistency of care. Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for improvement through investment in social care infrastructure and training for carers to ensure better support for CLA.

Community and social integration pose challenges for CLA, who often struggle with social integration and building stable support networks. Community programs and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion and providing social support networks for CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER present opportunities to address these challenges.

2.2 Children Looked After (CLA) Profile

This report provides a comparative analysis of the Children Looked After (CLA) on the Middlesbrough Virtual School (VS) roll for the years 2023 and 2024. The analysis highlights key trends and changes in demographics, educational placements, and care durations.

The total number of Children Looked After on the Middlesbrough Virtual School roll increased from 460 in 2023 to 474 in 2024. This represents a growth of 3%.

YEAR	TOTAL CLA	EARLY YEARS	STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE	POST-16
2023	460	45 (9.8%)	344 (74.8%)	71 (15.4%)
2024	474	34 (7.2%)	354 (74.7%)	86 (18.1%)

The gender distribution remained relatively stable, with a slight increase in the proportion of males.

Year	Total CLA	Male (%)	Female (%)
2023	460	266 (57.8%)	194 (42.2%)
2024	474	273 (57.6%)	201 (42.4%)

There was a notable shift in educational placements, with a decrease in the proportion of Children Looked After educated in borough and an increase in those educated out of borough.

Year	*Total CLA*	*In Borough (%)*	*Out of Borough (%)*
2023	**460**	**289 (62.8%)**	**171 (37.2%)**
2024	**474**	**270 (57%)**	**204 (43%)**

The proportion of Children Looked After who had been in care for 12 months or more increased slightly

YEAR	TOTAL CLA	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER12 MONTHS+ (%)
2023	**460**	**318 (69.1%)**
2024	**474**	**341 (71.9%)**

Breakdown by Educational Stage

Early Years

The number of Children Looked After in Early Years decreased from 45 to 34.

There was a significant decrease in the proportion of males and those educated in borough**.**

Year	Early Years	Male (%)	Female (%)	In Borough (%)	Out of Borough (%)	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER12 months+ (%)
2023	**45 (9.8%)**	**32 (71.1%)**	**13 (28.9%)**	**35 (77.8%)**	**10 (22.2%)**	**19 (42.2%)**
2024	**34 (7.2%)**	**19 (55.9%)**	**15 (44.1%)**	**19 (55.9%)**	**15 (44.1%)**	**18 (52.9%)**

Statutory School Age

The number of Children Looked After in Statutory School Age increased slightly from 344 to 354.

The proportion of males and those educated in borough remained stable**.**

Year	Statutory School Age	Male (%)	Female (%)	In Borough (%)	Out of Borough (%)	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER12 months+ (%)
2023	**344 (74.8%)**	**194 (56.4%)**	**150 (43.6%)**	**199 (57.8%)**	**145 (42.2%)**	**252 (73.3%)**
2024	**354 (74.7%)**	**200 (56.5%)**	**154 (43.5%)**	**200 (56.5%)**	**154 (43.5%)**	**260 (73.4%)**

Post-16

The number of Children Looked After in Post-16 increased significantly from 71 to 86.

There was an increase in the proportion of males and those educated out of borough.

Year	Post-16	Male (%)	Female (%)	In Borough (%)	Out of Borough (%)	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER12 months+ (%)
2023	71 (15.4%)	40 (56.3%)	31 (43.7%)	55 (77.5%)	16 (22.5%)	47 (66.2%)
2024	86 (18.1%)	54 (62.8%)	32 (37.2%)	51 (59.3%)	35 (40.7%)	63 (73.3%)

The year-on-year analysis of the Children Looked After cohort for Middlesbrough Virtual School reveals several important trends. The total Children Looked After cohort grew by 3%, with a notable increase in the Post-16 group. The gender distribution remained stable, with a slight rise in the proportion of males. There was a shift towards more Children Looked After being educated out of borough, and the proportion of Children Looked After in care for 12 months or more increased, indicating greater stability. These trends highlight the need for targeted support and resources to ensure the continued well-being and educational success of the Children Looked After cohort.

Gender, Age, Ethnicity

The proportion of Children Looked After identified as Asian or Asian British increased from 2% in 2022-2023 to 3.2% in 2023-2024.

The proportion of Children Looked After identified as Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African decreased from 5% to 4%.

The proportion of White Children Looked After remained relatively stable, though there was a slight decrease from 82% to 79.5%. The majority of the Children Looked After cohort continues to be White, with White British children making up the largest segment.

The proportion of Children Looked After from Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups increased from 7.8% to 8.4%.

The proportion of Children Looked After from other ethnic groups increased from 3.3% to 4.9%.

The comparative analysis of the ethnic composition of the Children Looked After cohort reveals several key differences and trends. The increase in the proportion of Asian or Asian British and Mixed ethnic groups, along with the rise in other ethnic backgrounds, underscores the growing diversity within the Children Looked After cohort. Conversely, the decrease in Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African Children Looked After

suggests a shift in the ethnic makeup of the cohort. These trends highlight the need for culturally responsive support and resources to cater to the varied needs of the Children Looked After

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER with SEND

This analysis examines the changes in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) data for Children Looked After (CLA) on the Middlesbrough Virtual School (VS) roll between the years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The data is segmented by educational stages: Early Years, Statutory School Age (SSA), and Post-16. Key differences and trends are highlighted, with conclusions drawn on potential reasons for these changes.

Overall SEND Data Comparison

The overall proportion of Children Looked After with SEND (either EHCP or SEN Support) remained relatively stable, with a slight increase from 55.2% in 2022-2023 to 55.3% in 2023-2024. This indicates consistent identification and support for SEND across the cohort.

Year	Total No. CLA	EHCP	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(EHCP)	SEN Support	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(SEN Support)	Total with SEND (EHCP or SEN Support)	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(Total with SEND)	No SEN	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(No SEN)
2022-2023	460	115	25%	139	30.2%	254	55.2%	206	44.8%
2023-2024	474	120	25.3%	142	30%	262	55.3%	212	44.7%

Early Years Comparison

The proportion of Children Looked After with SEND in Early Years decreased slightly from 31.1% to 29.4%. This reduction may be due to improved early intervention strategies, leading to better support and potentially fewer children requiring formal SEND identification.

Year	Total No. CLA	EHCP	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(EHCP)	SEN Support	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(SEN Support)	Total with SEND (EHCP or SEN Support)	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(Total with SEND)	No SEN	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(No SEN)
2022-2023	45	3	6.7%	11	24.4%	14	31.1%	31	68.9%
2023-2024	34	2	5.9%	8	23.5%	10	29.4%	24	70.6%

Statutory School Age Comparison

The proportion of Children Looked After with SEND in SSA remained stable, with a slight decrease from 61.9% to 61.6%. Year 9 continues to have the highest proportion with SEND at 79.1%, followed by Year 11 at 77.1%. This stability suggests ongoing challenges in secondary education, necessitating sustained support.

Year	Total No. CLA	EHCP	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(EHCP)	SEN Support	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(SEN Support)	Total with SEND (EHCP or SEN Support)	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(Total with SEND)	No SEN	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(No SEN)
2022-2023	344	94	27.3%	119	34.6%	213	61.9%	131	38.1%
2023-2024	354	96	27.1%	122	34.5%	218	61.6%	136	38.4%

Post-16 Comparison

The proportion of Children Looked After with SEND in Post-16 increased slightly from 38% to 39.5%. This increase may reflect better identification and support for SEND as children transition to further education and training.

Year	Total No. CLA	EHCP	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(EHCP)	SEN Support	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(SEN Support)	Total with SEND (EHCP or SEN Support)	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(Total with SEND)	No SEN	% CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER(No SEN)
2022-2023	71	18	25.4%	9	12.7%	27	38%	44	62%
2023-2024	86	22	25.6%	12	14%	34	39.5%	52	60.5%

The comparative analysis of SEND data reveals overall stability in the proportion of children with SEND. The slight decrease in Early Years SEND may indicate improved early intervention, while the stability in SSA highlights ongoing challenges in secondary education. The increase in Post-16 SEND suggests better identification and support during the transition to further education. These trends underscore the need for continued and targeted support across all educational stages to ensure the well-being and educational success of Children Looked After with SEND.

Importance of Good or Better Schools for Children Looked After

Children Looked After often face unique challenges that can impact their educational outcomes. Ensuring that these children are placed in good or better schools is crucial for several reasons. Good or better schools typically provide a higher standard of education, which is essential for the academic success of Children Looked After. These schools are more likely to have robust support systems in place, including trained staff who

can address the specific needs of Children Looked After. A stable and high-quality educational environment can provide a sense of normalcy and security, which is particularly important for Children Looked After who may have experienced significant upheaval in their lives. Research indicates that children in good or better schools are more likely to achieve better academic results, which can lead to improved life chances and opportunities. However, this must be balanced with the need for stability. If a child is already in a school that is rated below good, it may not always be in their best interest to move, especially if they have established relationships and are receiving high levels of support and challenge through their Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

Middlesbrough School aged Children Looked After are placed across a total of 147 settings, including 63 mainstream primary schools (42.9%), 44 mainstream secondary schools (29.9%), 31 special schools (21.1%), and 9 AP/other settings (6.1%). Of these settings, 111 (75.5%) are rated as Good, 20 (13.6%) as Outstanding, 3 (2%) as Requires Improvement, 1 (0.7%) as Inadequate, 1 (0.7%) as having Serious Weaknesses, and 11 (7.5%) have no rating.

131 out of 147 settings (89.1%) are rated as Good or Outstanding, indicating that the majority of Children Looked After are placed in high-quality educational environments. Only 2 settings (1.4%) are rated as Inadequate or having Serious Weaknesses, suggesting that very few Children Looked After are in schools that are significantly underperforming. The 11 settings (7.5%) with no rating.

While the majority of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough are placed in good or better schools, it is essential to continuously monitor and support those in settings that require improvement or have no rating. The decision to move a child from a below-good school should be carefully considered, weighing the potential benefits of a higher-quality educational environment against the importance of stability and existing support systems. High-quality PEPs that offer both high support and high challenge are crucial in ensuring that all Children Looked After receive the best possible education and opportunities for success.

The type of homes and home stability for CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Research indicates that different placement types for Children Looked After (CLA) often yield varying educational outcomes. However, it is crucial to highlight the nuance of individual child needs, which can significantly impact these outcomes. Stability in placements is a key factor that influences the well-being and development of CLA, and research supports the importance of stable placements in achieving better educational and emotional outcomes.

Studies have shown that children in long-term stable placements tend to perform better academically compared to those in temporary or multiple placements. The type of placement, such as foster care or residential care, can affect access to educational resources and support.

Each child's unique needs, including emotional, psychological, and educational requirements, must be considered when evaluating placement outcomes. Tailored support and interventions are essential to address these needs effectively.

Stability in placements is associated with improved emotional and behavioural outcomes. Children who experience fewer placement moves are more likely to develop secure attachments and benefit from consistent educational support. The provided data highlights the placement types and stability for School aged Children Looked After(N=353).

The largest group, 48.7%, is in short-term fostering, which may indicate a higher level of instability. Short-term placements can disrupt educational continuity and emotional stability. In contrast, 20.4% are in long-term fostering, which is generally more stable and beneficial for educational outcomes. Additionally, 9.3% are placed with parents, which can vary in stability depending on the family situation.

The average number of placements in the last 12 months is 1.5, with 69.1% having only one placement. This suggests a relatively stable recent period for the majority. However, 30.9% have had multiple placements, indicating instability for a significant portion of CLA. The average number of placements whilst Children Looked After is 3.6, with 37.7% having 2 or 3 placements. Frequent moves can negatively impact educational and emotional development. Notably, 11.6% have had 10 or more placements, which is highly concerning and likely to result in significant disruption to their lives.

Regarding placement length, 46.7% have been in their current placement for less than 12 months, suggesting recent instability. On the other hand, 21.5% have been in their current placement for over 3 years, indicating a stable environment for this group.

This underscores the importance of stable placements for CLA. While a significant portion of school age Children Looked After have experienced stability in the last 12 months, there remains a considerable number who face frequent moves and instability. Addressing the individual needs of each child and striving for long-term stable placements can enhance their educational and emotional outcomes. Continued research and tailored interventions are essential to support these vulnerable children effectively.

3. Strategic Vision and Leadership

The Middlesbrough Virtual School is dedicated to ensuring that Children Looked After (CLA) receive the highest quality education and support, guided by both government policy and a strong moral imperative. The vision of the Middlesbrough Virtual School is to create a nurturing and inclusive educational environment where every child can achieve their full potential. This vision is underpinned by core values of equity, excellence, empowerment, and collaboration. Equity ensures that all Children Looked After have equal access to educational opportunities and resources. Excellence is pursued through the highest standards in teaching, learning, and care. Empowerment involves encouraging Children Looked After to take an active role in their education and future, while collaboration emphasizes working together with various stakeholders to support the holistic development of CLA.

In recent years, the duties of the Virtual School have been extended to include all children who have previously been in care. This change came into effect following the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which expanded the responsibilities of Virtual Schools to support children who have left care through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders, or Child Arrangement Orders. This extension means that the Virtual School now provides ongoing support to ensure these children continue to receive the educational assistance they need to succeed.

The Virtual School has a strategic responsibility for children with a social worker. This role involves ensuring that these children receive the necessary support to overcome barriers to their education. The Virtual School is committed to promoting attachment-aware and trauma-informed practices, raising the profile of these children, and ensuring that systems work effectively to provide them with access to high-quality educational provision. The goal is to ensure that children with a social worker are able to attend school regularly and achieve well. Partnerships and multi-agency working are integral to the success of the Middlesbrough Virtual School. The Virtual school collaborates closely with other local authorities, children's social care, health services, and other local authority departments, to ensure a coordinated approach to the care and education of the young people within its remit. Engagement with schools and educational providers is also crucial, as it ensures that those students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Additionally, the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provides further support and enrichment opportunities, enhancing their overall educational experience.

The Middlesbrough Virtual School places a strong emphasis on pupil voice and co-production, ensuring that Children Looked After are actively involved in decisions that affect their education and wellbeing. Regular feedback mechanisms, via the PEP, are implemented to allow Children Looked After to share their experiences and provide feedback on the support they receive. The co-production of educational plans involves Children Looked After in the development of their Personal Education Plans (PEPs), ensuring that their needs and aspirations are fully considered.

This strategic vision and leadership framework aims to create a supportive and empowering environment for CLA, ensuring that they have the opportunities and support needed to thrive both academically and personally.

4. Attendance and Engagement

Good attendance is a fundamental aspect of academic success and overall well-being. Regular school attendance ensures that students do not miss out on essential learning opportunities, which can significantly impact their academic performance and future prospects. It also helps in developing a sense of responsibility and discipline, which are important life skills.

For Children Looked After, consistent school attendance is particularly important due to the unique challenges they face. These children often experience instability in their personal lives, which can affect their emotional and psychological well-being. School can provide a stable and supportive environment, offering a sense of normalcy and routine. Regular attendance helps in building relationships with peers and teachers, which can be crucial for their social development and emotional support.

Overall Attendance

The overall attendance for all statutory school-aged Children Looked After from 1st September 2023 to 25th July 2024 was 86.75%. Authorised absences accounted for 7.56% of the total, while unauthorised absences were 5.69%.

Category	Attendance - Present Days %	Authorised Absence Days %	Unauthorised Absence Days %
Overall CLA	**86.75**	**7.56**	**5.69**

Monthly Attendance Trends

Monthly attendance data reveals fluctuations throughout the academic year. The highest attendance was recorded in September 2023 at 89.64%.

Month	Attendance - Present Days %	Authorised Absence Days %	Unauthorised Absence Days %
September 2023	**89.64**	**6.25**	**4.11**
October 2023	**89.48**	**6.32**	**4.20**
November 2023	**88.69**	**6.62**	**4.69**
December 2023	**86.20**	**7.83**	**5.98**
January 2024	**85.70**	**6.75**	**7.55**
February 2024	**85.55**	**7.78**	**6.67**
March 2024	**86.11**	**7.86**	**6.03**
April 2024	**85.16**	**8.92**	**5.92**
May 2024	**85.83**	**7.73**	**6.45**
June 2024	**85.45**	**8.58**	**5.97**

July 2024	**85.99**	**9.25**	**4.75**

Termly Attendance

Attendance data by term shows a decline from the Autumn term to the Spring and Summer terms. The Autumn term had the highest attendance at 88.60%, while the Spring term had the lowest at 85.57%.

Term	Attendance - Present Days %	Authorised Absence Days %	Unauthorised Absence Days %
Autumn	**88.60**	**6.71**	**4.68**
Spring	**85.57**	**7.64**	**6.79**
Summer	**85.71**	**8.42**	**5.86**

Year Group Analysis

Attendance data by year group indicates that primary years (Reception to Year 6) generally have higher attendance rates. Year 6 had the highest attendance at 97.34%, while Year 11 had the lowest at 69.69%.

Year Group	Attendance - Present Days %	Authorised Absence Days %	Unauthorised Absence Days %
Reception	**91.77**	**6.95**	**1.27**
Year 1	**94.53**	**4.18**	**1.29**
Year 2	**93.73**	**5.46**	**0.81**

Year 3	**97.22**	**1.92**	**0.86**
Year 4	**97.04**	**2.22**	**0.73**
Year 5	**96.58**	**2.83**	**0.59**
Year 6	**97.34**	**1.52**	**1.14**
Year 7	**95.39**	**2.87**	**1.74**
Year 8	**83.75**	**6.03**	**10.22**
Year 9	**80.22**	**9.76**	**10.02**
Year 10	**74.86**	**16.89**	**8.25**
Year 11	**69.69**	**14.59**	**15.73**

Key Stage Analysis

Attendance data by key stage shows that KS1 and KS2 have significantly higher attendance rates compared to KS3 and KS4. KS2 had the highest attendance at 97.08%, while KS4 had the lowest at 72.44%.

Key Stage	Attendance - Present Days %	Authorised Absence Days %	Unauthorised Absence Days %
KS1	**94.08**	**4.91**	**1.02**
KS2	**97.08**	**2.07**	**0.85**
KS3	**85.46**	**6.64**	**7.91**
KS4	**72.44**	**15.81**	**11.74**

Areas of Strength

Primary Education (KS1 and KS2): High attendance rates, particularly in Years 3 to 6, indicating strong engagement and support at the primary level.

Early Years (Reception to Year 2): Consistently high attendance, suggesting effective early intervention and support.

Areas for Development

Secondary Education (KS3 and KS4): Noticeable decline in attendance, especially in Years 8 to 11. This suggests a need for targeted interventions to support older students.

Unauthorised Absences: Higher rates of unauthorised absences in secondary years, indicating potential issues with engagement and possibly underlying personal or social challenges.

Spring and Summer Terms have lower attendance compared to the Autumn term, suggesting a need for strategies to maintain engagement throughout the academic year.

Improving attendance for Children Looked After requires a focused approach, particularly in secondary education. Strategies could include enhanced support systems, mentoring programs, and addressing the specific challenges faced by older students. Ensuring a stable and supportive school environment can significantly impact their academic success and overall well-being

The Importance of Minimising Suspensions for Children Looked After

Suspensions should be a last resort for Children Looked After due to the unique challenges they face. These children often experience instability and trauma, which can affect their behaviour and emotional well-being. A suspension can exacerbate these issues by removing the child from a stable and supportive school environment, potentially leading to further disengagement from education.

The Virtual School plays a crucial role in working with schools to reduce suspensions. They provide information advice and guidance on targeted support and interventions to address the underlying issues that may lead to behaviours that challenge. This includes working closely with teachers, caregivers, and other professionals to develop individualised support plans, offering training and resources to school staff, and promoting positive behaviour strategies. The Virtual School also emphasises the importance of maintaining a stable school placement and ensuring that any disciplinary measures are proportionate and supportive.

It is noteworthy that there have been seven years with no permanent exclusions for CLA, highlighting the success of these collaborative efforts in creating a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Monthly Suspension Data

During the 2023-2024 academic year, there were a total of 168 suspensions involving 52 children, resulting in 297.5 days of suspension. This indicates a significant number of suspensions, highlighting the need for continued efforts to address and reduce these occurrences.

The gender distribution of suspended children shows that 44.2% were male (23 children) and 55.8% were female (29 children). The higher percentage of female suspensions is notable and warrants further investigation into the specific challenges faced by female CLA**.**

Suspensions were fairly evenly distributed between children attending schools in Middlesbrough and those outside of Middlesbrough. Specifically, 51.9% (27 children) were suspended from schools in Middlesbrough, while 50.0% (26 children) were suspended from schools outside of Middlesbrough. One child experienced suspensions from both in-area and out-of-area schools. This balanced distribution suggests that suspension issues are not confined to a specific geographic area.

The majority of suspensions occurred in KS3, with 59.6% (31 children) of the suspended children being in this key stage. KS4 also had a significant number of suspensions, accounting for 38.5% (20 children). Only 1.9% (1 child) of suspensions were in KS2. The high suspension rates in KS3 and KS4 highlight the need for targeted interventions at these stages to address behavioural that challenges and support these students more effectively.

Among the suspended children, 23.1% (12 children) had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), 48.1% (25 children) had SEN Support, and 28.8% (15 children) had no SEN. The high percentage of children with SEN Support (48.1%) indicates a need for additional resources and tailored interventions to support these students and reduce suspension rates.

Month	**No. of Suspension Episodes**	**No. of Children Suspended**	**No. of Sessions**	**No. of Days**
September 2023	10	5	20	10

October 2023	23	16	80	40
November 2023	14	11	45	22.5
December 2023	7	6	20	10
January 2024	17	11	61	30.5
February 2024	15	14	56	28
March 2024	22	12	84	42
April 2024	19	15	88	44
May 2024	15	11	53	26.5
June 2024	18	11	64	32
July 2024	8	8	24	12

The data outlines the importance of continued efforts to reduce suspensions for Children Looked After. The Virtual School's role in providing support and interventions is crucial in addressing the underlying issues that lead to suspensions. By fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment, we can help ensure that Children Looked After have the stability and support, they need to succeed academically and emotionally.

5. Virtual School Annual Conference

The Virtual School Annual Conference was held to bring together professionals from various sectors to discuss and develop strategies for supporting care-experienced young people. The event featured a series of keynote speeches, presentations, workshops and networking sessions, all aimed at providing valuable insights and practical advice.

Joe Tynan, Executive Director of Middlesbrough Children's Services, delivered a heartwarming opening address that set the tone for the day. His speech emphasised the importance of community and collaboration in supporting care-experienced young people. Joe's heartfelt words resonated deeply with the audience.

Kriss Akabusi, an Olympian and motivational speaker, shared his journey from the athletics track to becoming a life coach. His message focused on resilience, determination, and the power of believing in oneself. Kriss inspired the audience with his personal stories of overcoming challenges and achieving greatness.

Andy and Matt Smith, founders of Smash Life, spoke about their experiences growing up in the care system and how they turned their challenges into opportunities to help others. Their message was one of hope, resilience, and the importance of having someone who believes in you. They encouraged attendees to think creatively about how to engage and support young people.

Luke Rodgers, founder of The Care Leaders, discussed the importance of incorporating lived experiences into the development of social care services. His message highlighted the need for listening to and valuing the voices of care-experienced individuals. Luke's work aims to translate personal stories into actionable strategies to improve outcomes for young people.

The conference included workshops that provided attendees with opportunities to delve deeper into specific topics, such as creating aspirational education plans and understanding attachment and trauma. The networking sessions allowed for valuable connections and the exchange of ideas.

The Virtual School Annual Conference was a highly impactful event that successfully brought together professionals to discuss and develop strategies for supporting care-experienced young people. The keynote speeches were both inspiring and informative, providing valuable insights and practical advice. Joe Tynan's opening address set a positive and collaborative tone for the day, while Kriss Akabusi's motivational speech energised the audience. The presentations by Smash Life and Luke Rodgers offered powerful examples of how personal experiences can drive meaningful change. Overall, the conference was a resounding success, leaving attendees feeling inspired and equipped with new strategies to support care-experienced young people.

A special thanks to all those who attended and supported the conference. Your participation and contributions made this event truly memorable.

5.1 Feedback

"*Kriss's was truly inspiring. His message about resilience and believing will help me deal with challenges in my own work."*

"I was particularly struck by Kriss's personal stories. It was a powerful reminder that with determination and self-belief, we can achieve great things."

"Andy and Matt's presentation of their experiences growing up turning challenges into opportunities were really inspiring. It made me think about how I can better support the young people I work with."

"Luke's discussion on lived experiences and social care was eye-opening. It highlighted the need to listen to and value the voices of care-experienced children."

" I left feeling inspired to support care-experienced young people."

6. Attainment and Progress

Children in Care can be amongst the most vulnerable of learners. Many have had a disrupted education before coming into care, poor attendance, school moves, multiple exclusions and possibly elective home education. For those children coming into care late in their secondary school journey many have significant learning gaps. Many will have suffered trauma and have attachment difficulties which impacts upon neurological development. It is well researched and evidenced that the fight, flight or freeze response leading to the child often being hyper- vigilant will negatively affect their ability to focus in a school environment, until they feel safe and secure. This in turn has an impact on many of the skills needed for good learning. Children Looked After will inevitably suffer from a sense of loss whether this is due to being removed from birth family or bereavement, or they may feel very different to their peer group due to their circumstances. This often leads to low self-esteem - which again can affect confidence and the willingness to try new experiences and challenges. A key part of our work is to ensure that the education provided to Children in Care takes appropriate account of these factors in providing a bespoke approach suited to their needs. Children Looked After also experience changes in fostering arrangements, residential and care placements which can affect their schooling. This has been evidenced as a factor that impacts on outcomes by the research undertaken by the Rees Research Centre (The Educational Progress of Children Looked After in England: Linking Care and Educational Data, Nov 2015). The Virtual School Head's interim outcomes report captures attainment information for all Children Looked After alongside the qualifying cohort (children who have been in care for 12 months or more as at 31st March 2023 in line with the DfE's reporting methodology) the Virtual School actively supports every child in care regardless of duration in care.

There has been a return to pre-pandemic grading in England this summer as exams and assessments for all qualifications went ahead as normal this year and grading arrangements were also back to normal.

The Department for Education has confirmed it is not necessary for students to memorise formulae for GCSE mathematics and equations for GCSE physics and combined science in 2024.

The Department for Education has confirmed that 2024 will be the final year for these changes to its subject content requirements. There will be a return to normal exam arrangements for these subjects in 2025. This means that formulae and revised equation sheets will not be available after 2024. Students preparing for GCSE mathematics, physics and combined science exams in 2025 and beyond will be expected to know and recall all the usual formulae and equations set out in DfE's subject content.

7. End of Key Stage Outcomes

7.1 Early years Foundation stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework that sets the standards for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to age five. It is designed to ensure that children are provided with the best possible start in life and are prepared for school. The EYFS framework is used by all early years providers in England, including nurseries, preschools, and reception classes in primary schools.

In this academic year, 2022-2023, the EYFS framework continued to build on the reforms introduced in September 2021. These reforms aimed to reduce workload for practitioners, improve outcomes for children, and ensure that the curriculum is more focused on what children need to learn. Key changes included revised Early Learning Goals (ELGs), which were updated to provide clearer expectations for children's development at the end of the EYFS. The revised ELGs aimed to be more specific and easier to assess. Additionally, the reforms aimed to reduce the amount of paperwork and data collection required from practitioners, allowing them to spend more time interacting with children. There was also an increased emphasis on developing children's communication and language skills, recognizing the importance of these skills for future learning.

The EYFS framework is divided into seven areas of learning and development, which are further categorized into three prime areas and four specific areas. The prime areas include Communication and Language, Physical Development, and Personal, Social, and Emotional Development. These areas focus on developing children's listening, attention, understanding, speaking skills, gross and fine motor skills, health and self-care, and positive sense of self, relationships, and behaviour management. The specific areas include Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design. These areas involve encouraging children to link sounds and letters, read and write, develop counting and numerical skills, understand shapes and measures, make sense of their physical world and community, and express themselves through various media and materials.

Assessment in the EYFS is primarily based on ongoing observations of children as they engage in everyday activities and play. Practitioners use these observations to understand each child's level of achievement, interests, and learning styles. This information is then used to plan future learning experiences that are tailored to the individual needs of each child. At the end of the EYFS, practitioners assess children against the 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). These goals set out the expected level of development for children by the end of the reception year. The assessment is based on practitioners' observations and knowledge of the child, rather than formal testing.

Children's progress is recorded in the EYFS Profile, which is completed at the end of the reception year. For each of the 17 ELGs, children are assessed as either emerging, expected, or exceeding the expected level of development. The EYFS Profile provides a comprehensive picture of a child's development and is shared with parents and the child's future school to support their transition to Key Stage 1.

The EYFS framework is a vital part of early childhood education, providing a structured approach to learning and development for young children. The changes introduced in the academic year 2022-2023 aimed to enhance the framework by making it more focused and reducing the administrative burden on practitioners. Assessments in the EYFS are designed to be holistic and based on ongoing observations, ensuring that each child's unique needs and progress are recognized and supported.

The dataset below outlines the achievements of children in various categories in terms of their educational goals and benchmarking. The categories include National (CLA), DfE Region - North East (CLA), Statistical Neighbours (CLA), Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools), and Virtual School - Middlesbrough. The data includes the number of eligible children, the percentage of CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER matches, the percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD), the average number of expected Early Learning Goals (ELGs), and the percentage of children achieving specific goals in areas such as Communication (COM), Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSE), Physical Development (PHY), Literacy (LIT), Mathematics (MAT), Understanding the World (UTW), and Expressive Arts and Design (EXP).

EYFS outcomes Benchmarking data

				ACHIEVED EXPECTED									
Eligible	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER Matches	GLD [1] [2]	Avg. No. Exp. ELGs[2]	COM	PSE	PHY	Prime Goals	LIT	MAT	UTW	EXP	Specific Goals	All Goals

NCER National (CLA)	1,140	101.0%	**39.0%**	10.8	59.0%	55.0%	63.0%	46.0%	43.0%	55.0%	61.0%	69.0%	41.0%	38.0%
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	80	101.0%	**36.0%**	10.4	53.0%	53.0%	68.0%	44.0%	39.0%	48.0%	58.0%	65.0%	38.0%	36.0%
Statistical Neighbours (CLA)	110	100.0%	**45.0%**	11.2	61.0%	58.0%	68.0%	50.0%	48.0%	58.0%	62.0%	68.0%	44.0%	42.0%
Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools)	1,876	-	**61.3%**	12.6	70.3%	74.5%	77.3%	66.6%	63.4%	69.1%	69.7%	74.9%	60.1%	59.0%
Virtual School - Middlesbrough	9	100.0%	**22.2%**	7.7	44.4%	44.4%	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	33.3%	55.6%	44.4%	22.2%	22.2%

The National (CLA) data indicates that 39% of children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). The average number of expected ELGs is 10.8. The highest achievement is in the area of Expressive Arts and Design (69.0%), while the lowest is in Literacy (43.0%). This suggests that while children are excelling in creative and expressive areas, there is a need for improvement in literacy skills.

In the DfE Region - North East (CLA), 36% of children achieved GLD, with an average of 10.4 expected ELGs. The highest achievement is in Physical Development (68.0%), while the lowest is in Literacy (39.0%). This indicates a strong performance in physical skills but highlights a similar need for improvement in literacy.

For Statistical Neighbours (CLA), 45% of children achieved GLD, with an average of 11.2 expected ELGs. The highest achievement is in Expressive Arts and Design (68.0%), while the lowest is in Literacy (48.0%). This pattern is consistent with the national data, showing strengths in creative areas and a need for development in literacy.

In the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools), 61.3% of children achieved GLD, with an average of 12.6 expected ELGs. The highest achievement is in Expressive Arts and Design (74.9%), while the lowest is in Literacy (63.4%). This data shows a higher overall performance compared to national and regional averages, with significant strengths in creative and physical development, but still indicates room for improvement in literacy.

For Middlesbrough Children Looked After, 22.2% of children achieved GLD, with an average of 7.7 expected ELGs. The highest achievement is in Understanding the World (55.6%), while the lowest is in Literacy (22.2%). This data highlights significant challenges, with lower overall performance and particular difficulties in literacy.

Comparing Middlesbrough children to other cohorts, it is evident that Middlesbrough (all schools) performed better overall, with 61.3% of children achieving GLD, which is significantly higher than the national average (39%), the DfE Region - North East (36%), and Statistical Neighbours (45%). Middlesbrough children also had a higher average number of expected ELGs (12.6) compared to the other cohorts. The highest achievement in Middlesbrough was in Expressive Arts and Design (74.9%), which was better than the highest achievements in the other cohorts.

However, Middlesbrough Children Looked After had a lower performance, with only 22.2% of children achieving GLD, which is below the national average and other cohorts. The average number of expected ELGs (7.7) was also lower. The highest achievement in this group was in Understanding the World (55.6%), but the lowest was in Literacy (22.2%), indicating significant challenges in this area.

Overall, while Middlesbrough (all schools) shows strong performance in creative and physical development, there is a consistent need for improvement in literacy skills across all categories. Addressing these literacy challenges could help to further enhance the overall educational outcomes for children in these regions

7.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN) support EYFS Benchmark

Understanding and analysing the outcomes for Children Looked After (CLA) and those with special educational needs (SEND) is crucial to our mission. Our commitment to breaking down and examining this data underscores our dedication to their well-being and development. By leveraging these insights, we can ensure that our interventions are effective, our resources are well-allocated, and our policies are evidence-based. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of these children.

		Eligible	CLA Matches	GLD [1] [2]	Avg. No. Exp. ELGs[2]	ACHIEVED EXPECTED COM	PSE	PHY	Prime Goals	LIT	MAT	UTW	EXP	Specific Goals	All Goals
NCER National (CLA)		1,140	101.0%	**39.0%**	10.8	59.0%	55.0%	63.0%	46.0%	43.0%	55.0%	61.0%	69.0%	41.0%	38.0%
E	EHC Plan	120	103.0%	-	2.4	10.0%	5.0%	11.0%	-	-	-	11.0%	18.0%	-	-
K	SEN Support	310	101.0%	**19.0%**	7.7	38.0%	33.0%	44.0%	23.0%	22.0%	38.0%	41.0%	53.0%	21.0%	18.0%
N	No SEN	690	101.0%	**55.0%**	13.6	77.0%	73.0%	80.0%	63.0%	60.0%	70.0%	79.0%	85.0%	57.0%	53.0%
Unknown		20	105.0%	-	7.0	37.0%	32.0%	37.0%	-	-	-	37.0%	42.0%	-	-
DfE Region - North East (CLA)		80	101.0%	**36.0%**	10.4	53.0%	53.0%	68.0%	44.0%	39.0%	48.0%	58.0%	65.0%	38.0%	36.0%
E	EHC Plan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K	SEN Support	20	100.0%	-	8.1	-	35.0%	47.0%	-	-	41.0%	53.0%	59.0%	-	-
N	No SEN	50	100.0%	**47.0%**	12.6	69.0%	67.0%	84.0%	57.0%	51.0%	57.0%	69.0%	76.0%	49.0%	47.0%
Unknown		-	-	**0.0%**	-	0.0%	-	-	0.0%	0.0%	-	-	-	0.0%	0.0%

For the National (CLA) category, the average number of expected Early Learning Goals (ELGs) is approximately 10.8. About 39% of children achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD). Specific goals such as Communication (COM) are achieved by 59% of children, Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSE) by 55%, Physical Development (PHY) by 63%, and Prime Goals by 46%.

In the EHC Plan category, the average number of expected ELGs is around 2.4. The percentage of children achieving GLD is not provided. However, 10% achieve COM, 5% achieve PSE, and 11% achieve PHY, with no data for Prime Goals.

Children receiving SEN Support have an average of 7.7 expected ELGs. About 19% achieve GLD, with 38% achieving COM, 33% achieving PSE, 44% achieving PHY, and 23% achieving Prime Goals.

For children with No SEN, the average number of expected ELGs is approximately 13.6. A significant 55% achieve GLD, with 77% achieving COM, 73% achieving PSE, 80% achieving PHY, and 63% achieving Prime Goals.

In the Unknown category, the average number of expected ELGs is around 7. The percentage of children achieving GLD is not provided. Specific goals are achieved by 37% for COM, 32% for PSE, 37% for PHY, with no data for Prime Goals.

In the DfE Region - North East (CLA) category, the average number of expected ELGs is about 10.4. Around 36% achieve GLD, with 53% achieving COM, 53% achieving PSE, 68% achieving PHY, and 44% achieving Prime Goals.

For Statistical Neighbours (CLA), the average number of expected ELGs is approximately 11.2. About 45% achieve GLD, with 61% achieving COM, 58% achieving PSE, 68% achieving PHY, and 50% achieving Prime Goals.

In the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) category, the average number of expected ELGs is around 12.6. A notable 61.3% achieve GLD, with 70.3% achieving COM, 74.5% achieving PSE, 77.3% achieving PHY, and 66.6% achieving Prime Goals.

For Middlesbrough CLA, the average number of expected ELGs is approximately 7.7. About 22.2% achieve GLD, with 44.4% achieving COM, 44.4% achieving PSE, 44.4% achieving PHY, and 33.3% achieving Prime Goals.

Middlesbrough Children Looked After show strengths in achieving specific goals such as COM, PSE, and PHY at a rate of 44.4%, which is a notable achievement given the challenges faced. The average number of expected ELGs (7.7) is higher than that of the EHC Plan category (2.4) and comparable to SEN Support (7.7).

However, there are areas for development. The percentage of Middlesbrough children achieving GLD (22.2%) is lower compared to the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (61.3%) and Statistical Neighbours (45%). There is also room for improvement in achieving Prime Goals (33.3%) compared to other categories such as No SEN (63%) and Statistical Neighbours (50%).

7.3 End of Key Stage 2 Outcomes

Key Stage 2 (KS2) in England refers to the stage of primary education that covers children aged 7 to 11 years old, encompassing Year 3 to Year 6. At the end of Key Stage 2, children undergo assessments to evaluate their progress in core subjects.

In Key Stage 2, children are assessed in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. These assessments are conducted through a combination of teacher assessments and national curriculum tests, commonly known as SATs. Teacher assessments are ongoing and provide a comprehensive view of a child's abilities and progress. Teachers evaluate children's performance based on their work throughout the year, including observations, classwork, and any other relevant activities.

The national curriculum tests, or SATs, are standardized tests taken by children in reading, mathematics, and grammar, punctuation, and spelling (GPS), usually in May. The reading test consists of a single paper with questions based on a variety of texts. The mathematics test includes three

papers: one focusing on arithmetic and two on mathematical reasoning. The GPS test comprises two papers: one on spelling and the other on grammar and punctuation. Writing and science are assessed solely through teacher assessments, without formal tests.

In the reading test, children read texts and answer questions to demonstrate their comprehension skills. The questions may include multiple-choice, short written answers, and longer written responses. In the mathematics test, children solve arithmetic problems and answer questions that test their understanding of mathematical concepts and reasoning. The GPS test assesses children's knowledge of spelling, grammar, and punctuation through a combination of multiple-choice questions, short written answers, and spelling exercises. Teacher assessments in writing and science involve evaluating children's skills through a combination of classwork, observations, and specific assessment tasks.

The results of these assessments are reported to parents, providing an overview of their child's progress and areas for development. The results also help schools identify areas where additional support may be needed and inform future teaching strategies. These assessments aim to ensure that children are developing the necessary skills and knowledge to progress to secondary education

The table below compares Middlesbrough Children Looked After (CLA) to various benchmarks including national averages, regional data, statistical neighbours, and local authority data. The dataset includes measures for Reading, Writing Teacher Assessment (TA), Maths, and Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling (GPS). Each category is measured in terms of the number of children in the group (cohort), the percentage of children meeting the expected standards (Children Looked After Matches), the percentage of children achieving at least the expected standard (≥ Exp), the percentage of children achieving high scores (High), the average scaled score (Avg. SS), the percentage of children below the expected standard (< Exp), and the percentage of children achieving greater depth standard (GDS).

			RWM*		READING				WRITING TA		MATHS				GPS			
	Cohort	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER Matches	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	≥ Exp	GDS	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High	Avg. SS	< Exp	≥ Exp	High
NCER National (CLA)	2,820	100.0%	34.0%	1.0%	101.8	45.0%	53.0%	15.0%	46.0%	4.0%	99.8	51.0%	47.0%	8.0%	100.7	51.0%	47.0%	13.0%
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	200	100.0%	35.0%	-	101.7	44.0%	55.0%	13.0%	47.0%	5.0%	100.8	46.0%	52.0%	9.0%	100.7	50.0%	49.0%	10.0%

Statistical Neighbours (CLA)	**220**	**100.0%**	**40.0%**	**-**	**101.8**	**40.0%**	**58.0%**	**15.0%**	**50.0%**	**-**	**99.7**	**44.0%**	**55.0%**	**8.0%**	**100.8**	**47.0%**	**53.0%**	**13.0%**
Virtual School - Middlesbrough	**16**	**100.0%**	**31.3%**	**0.0%**	**99.7**	**37.5%**	**56.3%**	**6.3%**	**50.0%**	**0.0%**	**99.7**	**43.8%**	**50.0%**	**12.5%**	**98.0**	**50.0%**	**43.8%**	**6.3%**
Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools)	**2,153**	**0.9%**	**59.7%**	**6.0%**	**104.4**	**27.9%**	**71.0%**	**24.6%**	**71.8%**	**11.7%**	**103.9**	**26.8%**	**72.2%**	**20.5%**	**103.6**	**32.7%**	**66.4%**	**23.6%**

Reading

Middlesbrough Children Looked After had 31.3% of students achieving at least the expected standard in reading, which is lower than the national average for CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (34.0%), the regional average for the North East (35.0%), and the average for statistical neighbours (40.0%). The average scaled score for Middlesbrough CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER in reading was 99.7, which is also lower than the national (101.8), regional (101.7), and statistical neighbours (101.8). This indicates that Middlesbrough CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER are underperforming in reading compared to their peers.

Writing Teacher Assessment (TA)

In writing TA, 37.5% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After met the expected standard, which is lower than the national average (45.0%) and the regional average (44.0%), but comparable to statistical neighbours (40.0%). However, 56.3% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After achieved greater depth, which is higher than the national (53.0%) and regional (55.0%) averages, and slightly lower than statistical neighbours (58.0%). This suggests that while fewer Middlesbrough Children Looked After meet the expected standard in writing, those who do perform at a higher level.

Maths

For maths, 50.0% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After met the expected standard, which is higher than the national (46.0%) and regional (47.0%) averages, and equal to statistical neighbours (50.0%). The average scaled score for Middlesbrough Children Looked After in maths

was 99.7, which is lower than the national (99.8), regional (100.8), and statistical neighbours (99.7). This indicates that while a higher percentage of Middlesbrough Children Looked After meet the expected standard in maths, their overall performance is slightly lower in terms of scaled scores.

Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling (GPS)

In GPS, 43.8% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After met the expected standard, which is lower than the national (51.0%), regional (46.0%), and statistical neighbours (44.0%). The percentage of Middlesbrough Children Looked After achieving greater depth in GPS was 50.0%, which is comparable to the national (47.0%), regional (52.0%), and statistical neighbours (55.0%). This suggests that Middlesbrough Children Looked After are underperforming in GPS compared to their peers, but those who achieve greater depth perform similarly to others.

When compared to the overall performance of all schools in the Middlesbrough local authority, Middlesbrough Children Looked After are significantly underperforming. For example, 59.7% of all students in Middlesbrough achieved at least the expected standard in reading, compared to 31.3% of CLA. In writing TA, 27.9% of all students met the expected standard, compared to 37.5% of CLA, but 71.0% of all students achieved greater depth, compared to 56.3% of CLA. In maths, 71.8% of all students met the expected standard, compared to 50.0% of CLA, and in GPS, 26.8% of all students met the expected standard, compared to 43.8% of CLA.

Middlesbrough Children Looked After generally perform below national, regional, and statistical neighbour averages in reading and GPS. However, they perform relatively well in writing TA and maths, particularly in achieving greater depth standards. Compared to the overall performance of all schools in the Middlesbrough local authority, Middlesbrough Children Looked After are significantly underperforming in most areas.

The below dataset shows the educational performance of Children Looked After (CLA) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across different categories such as Reading, Writing Teacher Assessment (TA), Maths, and Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling (GPS). It is important to show how Children Looked After with SEND are achieving because these children often face additional challenges that can impact their educational outcomes. By analysing their performance, we can identify areas where additional support is needed and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

SEN Provision (Codes)	SEN Provision (Codes)	Cohort	CLA Matches	RWM* ≥ Exp	RWM* High	READING Avg. SS	READING < Exp	READING ≥ Exp	READING High	WRITING TA ≥ Exp	WRITING TA GDS	MATHS Avg. SS	MATHS < Exp	MATHS ≥ Exp	MATHS High	GPS Avg. SS	GPS < Exp	GPS ≥ Exp	GPS High
NCER National (CLA)		**2,820**	**100.0%**	**34.0%**	**1.0%**	**101.8**	**45.0%**	**53.0%**	**15.0%**	**46.0%**	**4.0%**	**99.8**	**51.0%**	**47.0%**	**8.0%**	**100.7**	**51.0%**	**47.0%**	**13.0%**
E	E	750	100.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0%	-	-	-	2.0%	-	-	-	-
K	K	900	100.0%	24.0%	1.0%	99.4	51.0%	47.0%	11.0%	37.0%	2.0%	97.8	58.0%	40.0%	5.0%	98.1	59.0%	39.0%	8.0%
N	N	1160	100.0%	-	3.0%	105.1	20.0%	80.0%	24.0%	-	7.0%	103.0	25.0%	75.0%	14.0%	104.5	24.0%	75.0%	23.0%
Unknown	Unknown	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	-	0.0%	-	-	-	-
DfE Region - North East (CLA)		**200**	**100.0%**	**35.0%**	**-**	**101.7**	**44.0%**	**55.0%**	**13.0%**	**47.0%**	**5.0%**	**100.8**	**46.0%**	**52.0%**	**9.0%**	**100.7**	**50.0%**	**49.0%**	**10.0%**
E	E	40	100.0%	-	0.0%	96.3	80.0%	20.0%	-	-	-	94.6	-	-	-	95.4	-	-	-
K	K	70	100.0%	-	-	99.4	49.0%	49.0%	-	-	-	99.0	-	-	-	97.4	-	-	-
N	N	80	100.0%	60.0%	-	104.9	24.0%	76.0%	23.0%	80.0%	7.0%	103.5	24.0%	76.0%	17.0%	104.6	24.0%	76.0%	19.0%
Statistical Neighbours (CLA)		**220**	**100.0%**	**40.0%**	**-**	**101.8**	**40.0%**	**58.0%**	**15.0%**	**50.0%**	**-**	**99.7**	**44.0%**	**55.0%**	**8.0%**	**100.8**	**47.0%**	**53.0%**	**13.0%**

The dataset includes various benchmarks, National (CLA), DfE Region - North East (CLA), Statistical Neighbours (CLA), and Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools). Each category is measured in terms of the number of children in the group (cohort), the percentage of children meeting the expected standards (Children Looked After Matches), the percentage of children achieving at least the expected standard (≥ Exp), the percentage of children achieving high scores (High), the average scaled score (Avg. SS), the percentage of children below the expected standard (< Exp), and the percentage of children achieving greater depth standard (GDS).

In reading, 31.3% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After achieved the expected standard, which is 2.7% lower than the national average of 34.0%, 3.7% lower than the North East average of 35.0%, and 8.7% lower than the statistical neighbours' average of 40.0%.

In writing TA, 37.5% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After met the expected standard, which is 7.5% lower than the national average of 45.0%, 6.5% lower than the North East average of 44.0%, and 2.5% lower than the statistical neighbours' average of 40.0%.

In maths, 50.0% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After achieved the expected standard, which is 4.0% higher than the national average of 46.0%, 3.0% higher than the North East average of 47.0%, and equal to the statistical neighbours' average of 50.0%.

In GPS, 43.8% of Middlesbrough Children Looked After met the expected standard, which is 7.2% lower than the national average of 51.0%, 2.2% lower than the North East average of 46.0%, and 0.2% lower than the statistical neighbours' average of 44.0%.

Overall, Middlesbrough Children Looked After performed slightly worse in reading and writing compared to other benchmarks, but they performed better in maths compared to the national and regional averages. In GPS, their performance is mixed, with a slight advantage over statistical neighbours but lower than the national and regional averages.

7.3 GCSE Grading System

The GCSE grading system has been updated from the traditional A* to G grades to a numerical system ranging from 9 to 1:

- **Grade 9**: Highest grade, equivalent to above an A*
- **Grade 8**: Between A* and A
- **Grade 7**: Equivalent to an A
- **Grade 6**: Between B and A
- **Grade 5**: Between B and C (considered a strong pass)
- **Grade 4**: Equivalent to a C (considered a standard pass)
- **Grade 3**: Between D and E
- **Grade 2**: Between E and F
- **Grade 1**: Equivalent to a G

Progress 8

Progress 8 is a measure of the progress students make from the end of Key Stage 2 (primary school) to the end of Key Stage 4 (secondary school). It is calculated based on students' performance in eight subjects, which include:

- English
- Maths
- Three English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects (such as sciences, computer science, geography, history, and languages)
- Three other subjects (which can be EBacc subjects or other approved academic, arts, or vocational qualifications

The Progress 8 score is determined by comparing students' actual GCSE results to their expected results, based on their Key Stage 2 scores. A positive Progress 8 score indicates that students have made more progress than expected, while a negative score indicates less progress.

Attainment 8

Attainment 8 measures the achievement of students across the same eight subjects used in Progress 8. It is calculated by adding up the points for each grade achieved in these subjects. The points are assigned as follows:

- Grade 9: 9 points
- Grade 8: 8 points
- Grade 7: 7 points
- Grade 6: 6 points
- Grade 5: 5 points
- Grade 4: 4 points
- Grade 3: 3 points
- Grade 2: 2 points
- Grade 1: 1 point

The total points are then divided by 10 to give the Attainment 8 score. This score provides an overall measure of students' academic achievement at the end of KS4.

Key Stage 4 is a crucial period in secondary education where students prepare for their GCSE exams. The new GCSE grading system uses numerical grades from 9 to 1. Progress 8 measures students' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4, while Attainment 8 measures their achievement across eight key subjects. Both metrics are used to assess school performance and student outcomes

The below data compares the performance of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough, end of Key Stage 4, to national averages, regional averages (North East), and statistical neighbours. It highlights differences in attainment, progress, and entry into key academic subjects, providing insights into areas where support and interventions may be needed to improve outcomes for these students.

				Progress 8			9-5			EBacc		Entry			
	Cohort	CLA Matches	Attainment 8	Cov.	Avg. Score	Conf. Int.	EBacc Eng. LL	EBacc Mat.	E&M	Entry	APS	EBacc Slots	Other Slots	Triple Sci.	≥2 Lang.
NCER National (CLA pupils)	5650	100.0%	18.7	77.0%	-1.29	±0.04	17.0%	13.0%	9.0%	12.0%	1.54	1.5	1.5	5.0%	0.0%
DfE Region - North East (CLA)	320	100.0%	20.2	84.0%	-1.33	±0.17	20.0%	17.0%	13.0%	15.0%	1.70	1.5	1.6	6.0%	-
Statistical Neighbours (CLA pupils)	370	100.0%	18.3	83.0%	-1.48	±0.16	15.0%	12.0%	9.0%	12.0%	1.49	1.5	1.5	6.0%	-
Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools)	1675	-	39.4	94.7%	-0.45	±0.07	53.4%	40.6%	36.0%	31.3%	3.42	2.5	2.6	12.2%	0.7%
Virtual School - Middlesbrough	35	100.0%	21.3	74.3%	-0.83	±0.54	22.9%	14.3%	11.4%	22.9%	1.80	1.5	1.8	5.7%	-

Middlesbrough Children Looked After, had a Progress 8 score of -0.83, which is better than the National (Children Looked After pupils) score of -1.29, the DfE Region - North East (CLA) score of -1.33, and the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) score of -1.48.

However, it is worse than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) score of -0.45. In terms of Attainment 8, Middlesbrough Children Looked After scored 21.3, which is higher than the National (Children Looked After pupils) score of 18.7 and the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) score of 18.3, but lower than the DfE Region - North East (CLA) score of 20.2 and significantly lower than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) score of 39.4.

For EBacc entry, Middlesbrough Children Looked After had a coverage of 74.3%, which is lower than the National (Children Looked After pupils) coverage of 77.0%, the DfE Region - North East (CLA) coverage of 84.0%, and the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) coverage of 83.0%, but higher than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) coverage of 94.7%.

The average EBacc slots for Middlesbrough Children Looked After were 1.80, which is higher than the National (Children Looked After pupils) average of 1.54, the DfE Region - North East (CLA) average of 1.70, and the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) average of 1.49, but lower than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) average of 3.42. In terms of EBacc APS, Middlesbrough Children Looked After scored 1.5, which is consistent with the National (Children Looked After pupils) and Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) scores, but lower than the DfE Region - North East (CLA) score of 1.6 and significantly lower than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) score of 2.5.

For Triple Science, Middlesbrough Children Looked After had a coverage of 5.7%, which is higher than the National (Children Looked After pupils) coverage of 5.0%, the DfE Region - North East (CLA) coverage of 6.0%, and the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) coverage of 6.0%, but lower than the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) coverage of 12.2%.

For the ≥2 Languages measure, Middlesbrough Children Looked After had a coverage of 0.0%, which is consistent with the National (Children Looked After pupils) coverage, but lower than the DfE Region - North East (CLA) coverage of 0.0%, the Statistical Neighbours (Children Looked After pupils) coverage of 0.0%, and the Local Authority - Middlesbrough (all schools) coverage of 0.7%.

Middlesbrough Children Looked After performed relatively well compared to other looked after cohorts. Their Progress 8 score of -0.83 was better than the national average for Children Looked After pupils (-1.29), the North East region (-1.33), and their statistical neighbours (-1.48). Their Attainment 8 score of 21.3 was also higher than the national average (18.7) and their statistical neighbours (18.3), though slightly lower than the North East region (20.2).

However, there is still significant work to be done to close the gap with their peers in all schools within the Local Authority of Middlesbrough. For example, the Attainment 8 score for all schools in Middlesbrough was 39.4, which is considerably higher than the 21.3 achieved by Middlesbrough Children Looked After. Similarly, the EBacc entry rate and average EBacc slots were much higher for all schools in Middlesbrough compared to the Children Looked After.

To close this gap, focused efforts on improving educational outcomes for Children Looked After are essential. This could include targeted support, additional resources, and tailored interventions to help these students achieve their full potential and perform on par with their peers.

8. The Role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After

The role of the Designated Teacher for Children Looked After is both demanding and impactful. Research indicates that effective Designated Teachers play a crucial role in promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after and care-experienced children. Schools

and other educational settings are required to appoint a Designated Teacher, ideally a member of the senior leadership team, who possesses the necessary seniority and professional experience to provide effective leadership.

The Designated Teacher is pivotal in championing the educational needs of children who are looked after and care-experienced children within their school. They play a key role in ensuring that these children have high-quality Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which are essential for tracking and supporting their educational progress.

It is imperative that Designated Teachers receive ongoing training and have sufficient time away from their regular timetable commitments to fulfil their role effectively. This includes attending the Virtual Schools' Designated Teacher Training, which occurs half-termly. The Designated Teacher should serve as the central point of contact for children who are looked after and previously looked after within the school. Additionally, they should raise awareness among parents of previously Children Looked After about the importance of informing the school of their status to ensure they receive the enhanced support they are entitled to.

The role of the Designated Teacher encompasses several critical responsibilities. They act as an advocate for children who are looked after, ensuring their needs are prioritised. They lead efforts to help school staff understand the challenges faced by these children and how positive support systems can help overcome these challenges. Promoting a culture of high expectations among all staff and providing advice to support this goal is another key aspect of their role. The Designated Teacher ensures that every young person has a voice in setting their learning targets and that their personal, emotional, and academic needs are prioritised.

Developing and monitoring systems for liaising with carers, social workers, health professionals, and the Virtual School is essential. The Designated Teacher supports carers and maintains regular communication with them. They monitor the educational progress, attainment, and attendance of all children who are looked after and previously looked after. Leading the development and implementation of each child's PEP and intervening if there is evidence of underachievement or absence is a crucial responsibility. Liaising with staff responsible for monitoring children on the Child Protection Register to ensure all children who are looked after are safeguarded is also part of their role.

Ensuring children who are looked after are prioritized in one-to-one tuition arrangements and that carers understand the importance of supporting learning at home is vital. The Designated Teacher provides feedback to the school governors at least once a year. Encouraging a whole school culture that supports children who are looked after by ensuring all staff have high expectations and set targets to accelerate educational progress is fundamental. Staff should be aware of the emotional, psychological, and social effects of loss and separation from birth families (attachment and trauma awareness) and how these experiences might affect the child's behaviour and ability to build trust.

The Designated Teacher should be aware of the Pupil Premium Plus+ budget allocated to the school and be able to demonstrate how effectively it has been utilized for each child. A summary of this utilization, without identifying individuals, should be made available on the school's website.

The role of the Designated Teacher is integral to the educational success of children who are looked after. By advocating for their needs, supporting staff, and ensuring robust systems are in place, Designated Teachers can significantly enhance the educational outcomes and overall well-being of these vulnerable children.

9. The Role of the Social Worker in Supporting Educational Outcomes and PEPs

The role of the social worker for Children Looked After is crucial in supporting their educational outcomes and ensuring the effectiveness of Personal Education Plans (PEPs). Social workers play a key role in advocating for the child's educational needs and coordinating with other professionals to develop comprehensive care plans that include educational goals. They work closely with Designated Teachers, foster carers, and the Virtual School to ensure that each child's PEP is tailored to their individual needs and supports their academic progress.

Social workers conduct regular visits and assessments to monitor the child's educational progress and well-being. They ensure that any barriers to learning are identified and addressed promptly. By providing consistent support and advocating for the child's educational needs, social workers help to create a stable and supportive environment that promotes academic success.

Ongoing training and support are essential for social workers to stay informed about best practices in education and child welfare. This includes training on attachment and trauma, as well as strategies for supporting children who have experienced significant adversity. By building trusting relationships with children and their families, social workers can effectively support their educational journey and help them achieve their full potential.

10. The Role of the Foster Carer in Supporting Educational Outcomes and PEPs

Foster carers play a vital role in supporting the educational outcomes of children who are looked after. They provide a stable and nurturing home environment that is conducive to learning and academic success. Foster carers are responsible for ensuring that the child's educational needs are met, including regular school attendance and engagement with their studies.

Foster carers work closely with social workers, Designated Teachers, and the Virtual School to develop and implement Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for each child. They play a key role in supporting the child's educational goals and providing encouragement and motivation. Foster carers also help to create a positive learning environment at home, where the child feels supported and valued.

Comprehensive training and support are essential for foster carers to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to support the child's education. This includes training on attachment, trauma-informed care, and strategies for managing behaviours that can challenge. By providing a stable and loving home, foster carers can help children who are looked after to thrive academically and reach their full potential.

11. The Role of the Virtual School in Supporting Educational Outcomes and PEPs

The Virtual School is instrumental in promoting the educational achievement of children who are looked after. It oversees the educational progress of these children within the local authority and ensures that they have access to high-quality education. The Virtual School works closely with Designated Teachers, social workers, and foster carers to develop and implement Personal Education Plans (PEPs) that are tailored to each child's needs.

The Virtual School monitors the attendance, attainment, and progress of children who are looked after, ensuring that any barriers to learning are identified and addressed. It provides training and support for school staff on attachment and trauma, as well as strategies for supporting the educational needs of these children. The Virtual School also advocates for the child's educational needs, ensuring that they receive the necessary support and resources to succeed academically.

By providing targeted support and advocacy, the Virtual School helps to close the educational gap for children who are looked after and promotes their academic achievement. Its role is essential in ensuring that these children have the opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed in their education

12. Delivering Training

The Virtual School plays a crucial role in delivering training to support the educational outcomes of Children Looked After. It provides training to teachers, teaching assistants, and other school staff to ensure they understand the specific needs of Children Looked After. This training often includes attachment and trauma awareness, effective teaching strategies, and emotional and social support. Foster carers also receive training from the Virtual School to help them support the educational needs of the children in their care. This includes understanding the education

system, supporting learning at home, and advocacy skills. Social workers are key advocates for Children Looked After, and the Virtual School provides training to ensure they are equipped to support the educational progress of these children. This includes educational planning, collaboration with schools, and monitoring progress. The Virtual School also offers ongoing professional development opportunities for all stakeholders involved in the education of Children Looked After. This includes workshops and seminars, online resources, and networking opportunities. The comprehensive training approach helps to create a supportive and effective learning environment for Children Looked After, ultimately improving their educational outcomes.

12.1 Half-Termly Training Programme Outline

The Virtual School designed a comprehensive half-termly training programme for all stakeholders involved in supporting the educational outcomes of children who are looked after. This program was developed by gathering views on training requirements from Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and identifying strategic development areas based on educational KPI data analysis throughout the year.

Understanding the Role of Stakeholders

- The program began with an overview of the roles of social workers, foster carers, Designated Teachers, and the Virtual School. "Understanding each other's roles is crucial for effective collaboration," one participant noted.
- The importance of collaboration and communication among stakeholders was emphasized.
- An introduction to Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and their significance was provided.

Attachment Theory

- Participants learned about attachment theory and its impact on child development. "This session helped me understand the importance of building secure attachments," a foster carer shared.
- Strategies for building secure attachments with children who are looked after were discussed.

Trauma-Informed Care

- The session focused on recognizing signs of trauma in children.
- Practical approaches to supporting children who have experienced trauma were provided. "The trauma-informed care strategies were incredibly useful," a social worker commented.

Developing Effective PEPs

- A step-by-step guide to creating high-quality PEPs was presented.
- Setting realistic and achievable educational goals was emphasized.
- Monitoring and reviewing PEPs to ensure progress was discussed. "This session gave me the tools to create more effective PEPs," a Designated Teacher remarked.

Supporting Educational Outcomes

- Strategies for improving attendance and engagement were shared.
- Techniques for supporting academic achievement and addressing barriers to learning were covered.

Effective Pupil Premium Plus and SMART targets

- understanding the Pupil Premium Plus+ budget and strategies for its effective use.
- Training on creating SMART targets in PEPs was provided, with practical examples.
- Emphasis was placed on linking SMART targets to PPP funding to support educational outcomes.

12.2 Report on Training Program Attendance and Effectiveness

The recent training program aimed to equip all stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to support the educational outcomes of children who are looked after effectively. By fostering collaboration and providing targeted support, the Virtual School helped ensure that these children had the opportunity to thrive academically and reach their full potential.

The training program was designed with a clear objective to enhance the educational support for looked-after children. The content provided was comprehensive and relevant, addressing key areas necessary for stakeholders to effectively support these children. The Virtual School demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering collaboration among stakeholders, which is crucial for the success of the program. However, attendance was notably low, with the same individuals participating repeatedly. This indicates that the program did not reach the intended target audience. The marketing strategies employed were insufficient in attracting the target audience. There is a need for more targeted and effective marketing campaigns. High turnover across all agencies likely impacted the program's effectiveness.

13. Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) is a statutory document that outlines the educational needs, progress, and support required for a child who is looked after by the local authority. It is part of the child's care plan and is designed to ensure that their educational needs are met and that they have the best possible opportunities to achieve their potential. PEPs should be initiated as soon as a child becomes looked after and must be reviewed regularly. The initial PEP should be completed within 20 working days of the child entering care. Subsequent reviews should take place at least every six months, but more frequent reviews may be necessary depending on the child's needs and circumstances.

PEPs are crucial for several reasons. They provide a tailored plan that addresses the specific educational needs and goals of the child, help track the child's academic progress, and identify any areas where additional support may be needed. PEPs facilitate collaboration between the child, their carers, social workers, teachers, and other professionals involved in their education. They ensure that there is a consistent approach to the child's education, even if there are changes in their living arrangements or school placements. Additionally, PEPs are a statutory requirement, ensuring that the educational needs of looked-after children are formally recognized and addressed.

The Virtual School plays a critical role in the quality assurance of PEPs. Their responsibilities include ensuring that PEPs are completed and reviewed in a timely manner and that they meet the required standards. They provide training and support to designated teachers, social workers, and other professionals involved in the PEP process. The Virtual School regularly monitors the quality of PEPs and evaluates their effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of looked-after children. They advocate for the educational needs of looked-after children and ensure that their voices are heard in the planning and review process. The Virtual School identifies areas for improvement and recommends strategies to enhance the quality and impact of PEPs.

13.1 PEP Completion Rates

As of July 25th, 2024, the completion rates for PEPs within the last four and six months are as follows:

Category	PEP within last 4 months	PEP within last 6 months
Early Years	**100%**	**100%**

Stat. School Age	**99.4%**	**100%**
Post 16	**98.8%**	**100%**
Overall	**99.4%**	**100%**

(Note: These figures exclude New To care, without a PEP yet. There were 2 Early Years, 7 Statutory School Age, and 2 Post-16 without a PEP).

The completion rates for PEPs within the last four and six months are impressive across all categories (Early Years, Statutory School Age, and Post-16). Specifically:

- Early Years, both within the last four months and six months are at a perfect rate of 100%.
- Statutory School Age completion rate within the last four months is slightly lower at 99.4%, but reaches a perfect rate of 100% within the last six months.
- Post-16 completion rate within the last four months is at a commendable rate of 98.8%, reaching a perfect rate of 100% within the last six months. Overall completion rates are high with an average of over 99% within the last four months of the year and a perfect rate of 100% within the last six months of the year.

Across the academic year of 2023-2024, a total of 1672 PEPs were completed for 562 young people. The distribution of PEPs across categories shows that statutory school age PEPs constitute the majority (71.9%), followed by post-16 (21.1%) and early years (6.9%).

Category	Total PEPs Completed	Gold	Green	Amber	Red
Early Years	**116**	**0**	**52**	**29**	**35**
Stat. School Age	**1203**	**5**	**539**	**297**	**362**
Post-16	**353**	**3**	**153**	**87**	**110**

Quality assessment reveals that only a small fraction (0.5%) achieved gold status while a significant portion (44.5%) were rated green. Amber and red ratings indicate areas for improvement with amber at (24.7%) and red at (30.3%).

PEP QA by Term: The quality assessment by term indicates variations in performance:

Term	Total PEPs Completed	Gold	Green	Amber	Red
Autumn Term	**612**	**1**	**228**	**204**	**179**
Spring Term	**486**	**4**	**267**	**61**	**154**
Summer Term	**574**	**3**	**249**	**148**	**174**

- Autumn Term: A total of 612 PEPs were completed with a lower percentage achieving gold status (0.2%) compared to other terms.
- Spring Term: A total of 486 PEPs were completed with a higher percentage achieving gold status (0.8%) and green status (54.9%).
- Summer Term: A total of 574 PEPs were completed with consistent performance across gold (0.5%), green (43.4%), amber (25.8%), and red (30.3%).

The average number of working days from PEP date to sign-off and completion varies across roles and terms:

Role	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Overall
Designated Teacher	**10.87**	**13.30**	**11.38**	**11.75**
Social Worker	**11.84**	**14.16**	**11.90**	**12.53**
Virtual School	**9.25**	**8.92**	**11.80**	**10.03**
PEP Completion	**21.95**	**23.65**	**24.72**	**23.40**

The distribution of days to completion indicates that most PEPs are completed within the range of:

Days to Completion	No. and % PEPs
1 – 5	21 (1.3%)
6 – 10	44 (2.6%)
11 – 15	195 (11.7%)
16 – 20	309 (18.5%)
21 – 25	445 (26.6%)
26 – 30	370 (22.1%)
30+	288 (17.2%)

While the completion rates are commendable across all categories and terms indicating strong performance in ensuring timely completion of PEPs for looked-after children in Middlesbrough, there are areas for improvement in quality assessment ratings, particularly in achieving higher gold status ratings and reducing amber/red ratings.

14. Use of Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) is a government-funded initiative aimed at supporting care-experienced young people in their educational journey

PP+ is designed to provide additional resources and support to care-experienced children, such as those in foster care or adopted from care. The primary objectives of PP+ are to enhance educational opportunities, raise aspirations, and improve outcomes for these children.

PP+ should be utilised for specialised educational programs, extracurricular activities, therapeutic support, and academic assistance. These interventions are tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by care-experienced children, ensuring they receive the support necessary to succeed.

Care-experienced children often face distinct challenges that require targeted support. PP+ is crucial in levelling the playing field and providing these children with opportunities to achieve their full potential. Using PP+ for general expenses undermines its purpose, as it is intended to offer something extra and specific to their needs.

Effective use of PP+ requires collaborative decision-making involving designated teachers, carers, social workers, and Virtual Schools. This collective responsibility ensures that the support provided is well-rounded and impactful, ultimately benefiting the children it is meant to serve.

Pupil Premium Plus is not just about making progress; it is about unlocking the potential of care-experienced children and giving them the opportunities they deserve. By working together, stakeholders can ensure that PP+ is used effectively to genuinely improve outcomes for these young people.

14.1 Pupil Premium Plus Policy

The Pupil Premium Plus (PPP) grant was set at £2,345 per pupil for the financial year 2022-2023.

Middlesbrough Virtual School provides a wide range of services to schools to support Children Looked After, including advice and guidance, management of the PEP process and associated quality assurance, exclusion support, advocacy, in-class TA and teacher support, one-to-one teaching support, and key stakeholder training.

These services cannot be provided without the top slicing amount. The remaining amount is paid directly to schools.

The devolved portion of funding to schools is £1,000 (£333 per term). If schools have effectively mapped the £666 Pupil Premium Plus from the previous two terms within the PEP, the spring payment of £333 is released to schools in May.

Schools can request additional funding where there is evidence that the £1,000 has been used to support the academic attainment of the students and further funding is needed to ensure students have access to the correct support and interventions.

Almost half the PP+ funding (47%) was devolved to schools. This year, there has been a significant increase in PPP required to support the mental health and wellbeing of our students. The last year for COVID recovery funding was 2022-2023.

Category	Percentage
Staffing	25%
COVID recovery	7%
Emergency Alternative Provision top up	9%
Top UP PPP to Schools	9%
Devolved PPP to Schools	31%
Enrichment	1%
EP Time (20 days a year)	1%
Professional commission & membership fees	1%
Training, books & publications	1%
Office expenses	0.3%
Laptops	0.7%
Mental health support	5%
Celebration awards	4%
Welfare Call	4%
Post Looked After: ATV	1%
Total	100%

From <https://middlesbroughcouncil-my.sharepoint.com/personal/trevor_dunn_middlesbrough_gov_uk/Documents/Documents/TD/@%20People/@Victoria/Annual%20Report%2023-24.docx>

15.Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Children Looked After in Middlesbrough

15.1 Trauma-Informed Practice Developments

Middlesbrough has been actively developing trauma-informed practices to better support Children Looked After. These practices involve training caregivers, and School settings to understand and respond to the effects of trauma. Key developments include:

- Regular training sessions for professionals working with Children Looked After to recognize and address trauma.
- Adoption of trauma-informed policies to ensure a consistent approach.
- Establishment of support networks for schools to share strategies and experiences.

For further detail please see PROCLAIM information.

15.2 Access to Mental Health Services

Access to mental health services is crucial for the wellbeing of Children Looked After. Middlesbrough has several initiatives to ensure these children receive the support they need:

- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) p**rovides specialised mental health services for children and young people, including those in care.
- Many schools in Middlesbrough have dedicated counsellors to support the mental health of students, including Children Looked After.
- HeadStart Middlesbrough focuses on building resilience and promoting emotional wellbeing among young people.
- If there is drift and delay and no ordinary available funding stream Virtual School can support with spot perches bespoke therapeutic interventions

15.3 Key Partnerships

Effective support for Children Looked After involves collaboration between various stakeholders. Key partnerships in Middlesbrough include:

- **Educational Psychologist**: Collaborates with the Virtual School to provide tailored assessments and interventions. They can share insights and strategies with Virtual School staff to support the child's learning and emotional well-being. They also support with delivery of PROCLAIM project.
- **Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) Lead**: Works with the Virtual School to integrate mental health support into the child's educational plan. They can coordinate services to ensure that the child's mental health needs are addressed, enabling them to focus better on their studies.
- **Children's Social Care**: Facilitates communication between the Virtual School and other services. They ensure that the child's educational needs are considered in their overall care plan and that the Virtual School has the necessary information to support the child effectively.
- **Youth Justice**: Engages with the Virtual School to provide educational support for children involved in the criminal justice system. They can help create individualised plans that keep the child engaged in their education and reduce the risk of reoffending.
- **Health Services**: Collaborates with the Virtual School to address any health-related barriers to learning. Health professionals can provide the Virtual School with information on the child's health needs and work together to ensure these needs are met in the school setting.
- **Foster Carers**: Work closely with the Virtual School to advocate for the child's educational needs. They can provide the Virtual School with insights into the child's home environment and support the implementation of educational plans.
- **Head Teachers and School Senior Leaders**: Partner with the Virtual School to ensure that Children Looked After receive appropriate educational support. They can share best practices, resources, and strategies with the Virtual School to create a supportive learning environment.
- **Children's Services Senior Leadership Team**: Ensures that the Virtual School Head (VSH) is integrated into the broader network of support for Children Looked After. They provide strategic direction and oversight, enabling the VSH to effectively coordinate with various stakeholders.

By fostering strong partnerships with educational psychologists, SEMH leads, social care, youth justice, health services, foster carers, and school leaders, the Senior Leadership Team ensures that the VSH has the necessary influence and resources to meet the educational needs of children with social workers. This collaborative approach maximizes the impact of the Virtual School across all areas of support

The Virtual School plays a central role in coordinating educational support for Children Looked After, and these partnerships are crucial in ensuring that the child's educational, emotional, and social needs are comprehensively addressed

16.The Extended Duties of the Virtual School

The 2019 review of children in need in England highlighted several key findings. A significant number of children were identified as being in need due to various factors such as abuse, neglect, family dysfunction, and disability. These children often faced poorer educational outcomes compared to their peers, including lower attendance rates, lower academic achievement, and higher exclusion rates. The review emphasised the importance of timely and effective support services to improve outcomes for these children, highlighting gaps in service provision and the need for better coordination among agencies.

Following the review, the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) was extended to include a broader range of responsibilities. The VSH's duties were expanded to promote the educational achievement of children who have or have had a social worker, including children in need and those who have been subject to child protection plans. The VSH is expected to provide strategic leadership and ensure a coordinated approach to supporting the educational needs of these children. This involves working closely with social care, education settings, and other partners to ensure that children receive the support they need to succeed academically.

The VSH is responsible for monitoring and improving the educational outcomes of children with a social worker. They provide training and support to designated teachers and other professionals to help them understand the impact of trauma and attachment issues on learning. Additionally, they act as advocates for children with a social worker, ensuring their educational needs are prioritised in care planning and decision-making processes.

16.1The PROCLAIM Programme

The PROCLAIM programme is designed to support schools, settings, and services in Middlesbrough in developing attachment and trauma-informed, relational practices. The aim is for all participants to be on an 'attachment aware and trauma informed' journey by 2025, enhancing the educational experience for everyone involved. Schools that join PROCLAIM commit to developing best practices in this area, with at least two Project Leads appointed to lead these efforts. The programme aligns with all inclusion services to provide consistent and effective support for children and families.

In the first year, 10 schools joined the PROCLAIM programme, followed by 15 schools in the second year. The journey begins with a three-hour training session for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Project Leads, scheduled between September and October 2024. This session

includes an audit of current practices and the development of an implementation plan. Following this, a one-hour online session will be held to finalize the audit and implementation plans.

Project Leads are required to submit termly updates and case studies, which are reviewed with the PROCLAIM team. Specialist training for all adults in the school is provided by AC Education and The Care Leaders. Reflective supervision sessions are held half-termly to support Project Leads in navigating the personal and professional challenges of implementing these practices.

The PROCLAIM practitioner network meets half-termly for two-hour face-to-face sessions, focusing on shared priorities such as improving transitions and developing restorative practices. Workshops on key issues are offered based on development priorities identified through audits. Schools also contribute impact data and case studies to the annual PROCLAIM conference, helping to develop a deeper understanding of challenges and outcomes.

A children and young people's reference group provides insights and feedback, ensuring that young people's voices are central to the work. Heads and LA partners form a strategic group to address broader issues affecting all schools and services, such as developing a relational behaviour management policy framework.

Psychologist support is available through PROCLES, helping schools apply theory to practice through individual case exploration. Additional elements of the programme include Master’s level modules in Attachment, Trauma, and Mental Health offered by Birmingham Newman University, and mentoring sessions from experienced senior leaders. Schools also have the opportunity to become mentors themselves, supporting others in implementing attachment and trauma-informed practices.

Impact Report from PROCLAIM Schools

In the academic year 2022-2023, PROCLAIM schools have demonstrated significant improvements in various areas compared to the previous year, 2021-2022.

There has been a 40% reduction in the number of suspensions from PROCLAIM schools, highlighting the effectiveness of the attachment and trauma-informed practices implemented. In comparison, non-PROCLAIM schools saw a 30.4% reduction in suspensions during the same period.

Additionally, PROCLAIM schools reported a 40.5% reduction in the number of days students were suspended, further emphasising the positive impact of the programme. Non-PROCLAIM schools experienced a 24.5% reduction in the number of days suspended.

The number of children suspended from PROCLAIM schools decreased by 19%, showcasing the programme's success in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Non-PROCLAIM schools saw a 15.4% reduction in the number of children suspended.

PROCLAIM schools have identified a difficulty with change or supply staff and have implemented strategies to give advanced warning and plan accordingly to support these transitions. Staff have become less personal in their response to behaviours and are more equipped to deal with complex behaviours without taking them to heart. They are allowing space between stimulus and response to ensure the best outcomes.

A collective vision has been developed due to close work with social workers, leading to improved communication between care teams. There is a sense of gratitude for the support provided and a feeling that the network around each child has become larger and more supportive.

These statistics and observations reflect the substantial progress made by PROCLAIM schools in creating a more positive and nurturing educational experience for their students.

16.2 The Vulnerable Children Attendance Project (VCAP)

The Vulnerable Children Attendance Project (VCAP) aims to improve the attendance of children with a social worker by fostering collaboration among schools, social workers, local authorities, and other key stakeholders. The principle "Attendance is everyone's business" from the DfE's guidance underscores the importance of partnership working and consistency of practice. VCAP addresses the Local Authority's strategic role in promoting the educational outcomes of children with a social worker, as outlined in the DfE's June 2022 document. Research shows a correlation between school attendance and higher academic achievement, and poor attendance particularly affects vulnerable groups like children with a social worker. These children often face complex issues such as neglect, abuse, domestic violence, mental ill-health, and substance misuse, leading to frequent transitions and challenging behaviours. School provides a consistent, safe, and nurturing environment for these children, making it crucial to support their attendance.

The June 2022 DfE guidance focuses on preventing patterns of absence, intervening early by using data to spot and address attendance issues, and targeting support for persistent and severe absentees. VCAP's objectives include rigorously tracking local attendance data for children with a social worker, making attendance a key focus of all frontline council services, and ensuring all operational staff understand their roles in delivering this strategy. The project involves a dedicated Attendance CWSW School Officer and VCAP Lead who provide communication and advice through targeting support meetings, multi-disciplinary support for families, and information, advice, and guidance to key stakeholders.

VCAP will monitor and improve attendance in conjunction with the Virtual School, building on the progress made since the expansion of the Virtual School Head's duties. This includes triangulating data, identifying persistently and severely absent children, driving a multi-agency approach to care planning, and providing training on barriers and evidence-based strategies. Information sharing is vital for promoting the welfare and educational outcomes of these children, and all parties involved must recognize its importance and adopt effective procedures. The

VCAP Lead, an appointed role within the Local Authority and part of the Virtual School Team, strategically promotes the attendance of children with a social worker on a child protection plan with attendance under 40%. The VCAP Lead also promotes strong partnerships across education settings and agencies, conducts root cause analysis of low attendance, drives multi-agency meetings, advocates for the school attendance and attainment of these children, escalates concerns to the Virtual School Head, and reports annually on trends, strengths, and areas for development.

The role of the CWSW Education Welfare Officer is to proactively offer support and guidance to schools and social workers to improve the school attendance of children with a social worker, use data to identify a cohort of low school attendance and analyses patterns, liaise and challenge schools and social workers when targets are not met, develop and deliver training packages, promote sharing good practice between schools, and link with the Virtual School and attendance teams. Schools are best equipped to support good attendance when they closely monitor attendance and absence, are inclusive and supportive, have well-trained staff, and have robust systems in place. Their role includes informing a pupil's social worker of unexplained absences, setting high expectations, communicating these expectations clearly, setting achievable targets, identifying unmet or unrecognized SEND, ensuring timely assessments, explaining the importance of good attendance, listening to parents and pupils, challenging non-attendance, having the right people to converse with parents, accurately recording attendance, analysing data, understanding attachment disruptions and trauma, contacting the VCAP Lead or CWSW School Attendance Officer when necessary, and continuously pushing for improvement.

Parents and carers must adhere to high expectations of attendance, liaise with and accept support from schools and social workers, attend support meetings, be vigilant of non-attendance patterns, take an interest in their child's school day, and keep the school updated on significant changes. Social care's role is to promote excellent attendance and punctuality, ensure these are key elements of the child's plan, consult with schools, discuss absence trends with parents, and consult with the VCAP Lead or CWSW School Attendance Officer. The project is embryonic, and impact data is difficult to collect due to the nature of the cohort. As John C. Maxwell said, "Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

17. Key Priorities for 2024–2025

17.2 Strategic objectives for the coming year:

- Enhance the visibility and recognition of Child Welfare Social Work (CWSW) within the educational framework.
- Improve the skills and knowledge of the workforce to better support Children Looked After.
- Ensure all Children Looked After have comprehensive and effective Personal Education Plans (PEPs).
- Build strong links with other services to support Children Looked After.
- Prioritise mental health support and overall wellbeing of Children Looked After.

17.3 Planned developments in data systems, training, partnerships,

- Conduct training needs assessments and develop tailored training programs and workshops.
- Partner with experts for specialised training and continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives.
- Collaborate with social care and schools to develop and maintain high-quality PEPs, and provide training and support to staff.
- Establish and maintain partnerships with mental health services, educational psychologists, learning advocates, mentors, post-16 support officers, and education welfare officers.
- Implement programs and initiatives focused on mental health and wellbeing, and monitor and evaluate their impact.

17.4 Continued focus on equity, outcomes, and aspiration:

- Provide high support and high challenge to drive improvement.
- Utilise data to inform decisions and continuously improve practices.
- Implement evidence-based interventions targeted to address specific needs and gaps in educational outcomes.
- Ensure that all initiatives are designed to enhance the educational outcomes and overall wellbeing of Children Looked After and those with a social worker, fostering an environment of equity and aspiration.

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Looked After Children with SEND

	Total	Post 16	EYFS	SSA
CLA Cohort	486	84	35	367
All SEND	273 (56%)	45 (53%)	5 (14%)	223 (61%)
Send support	148 (30%)	17 (20%)	5 (14%)	126 (34%)
EHCP	125 (26%)	28 (33%)	0	97 (27%)

- Compared to national CLA, there is less diagnosed SEND for Middlesbrough CLA
- More Middlesbrough CLA have a SEND support plan than an EHCP
- Nationally CLA with an EHCP is 54% Middlesbrough CLA are below with 27% of school age CLA with an EHCP.

'Around 70% of looked after children have some form of SEN, and it is likely that a significant proportion of them will have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.'

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities
January 2015 Statutory guidance.

NCY	Total	Male/Female		In Borough/ Out Borough	
		Male (M)	Female (F)	IB	OB
R	2	2	0	2	0
1	7	4	3	4	3
2	2	0	2	2	0
3	4	4	0	1	3
4	3	2	1	2	1
5	2	2	0	1	1
6	6	3	3	4	2
7	8	6	2	6	2
8	4	3	1	1	3
9	15	9	6	12	3
10	20	11	9	8	12
11	26	17	9	12	13
Total	99	63	36	55	43
%		63%	37%	56%	44%

- 62% of EHCPs are for SEMH needs
- The second highest primary need is Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), followed by Cognition and Learning.
- There are 26% more males than females with an EHCP.
- There are more CLA with an EHCP attending a school in Borough however the data shows that more young people in Years 3, 8, 10 and 11 attend an out of Borough school.
- KS4 have the highest number of CLA with an EHCP at 46% .

Current SEND CLA with no school roll	
Number (%) of CME CLA	19 (5.3%)
Number (%) with an EHCP	10 (52.6%)
Number with SEND support	4 (21.1%)
Number (%) male	7 (36.8%)
KS3 students	5 (26.3%)
KS4 Students	9 (47.4%)
Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (UCSA)	0

Less than 50% attendance	No. Children	%
No SEN	15	25%
SEN Support	17	28.3%
EHCP	28	46.7%
Total EHCP and SEN Support	45	75%

- There are 12 CLA with SEND that are not on a school roll, 8 with an EHCP and 4 with SEN support.
- There are 23 CLA with SEND that are receiving under 25 hours, 17 have an EHCP and 6 have SEN support.
- Since the start of the academic year, from 1st September 2024 to 19th June 2025, 38 (71.7%) of CLA suspended had SEND - 15 (28.3%) had an EHCP and 23 (43.4%) had SEN support.
- Post-16: 25 (55.6%) of the 45 young people with SEND are EET.

SEND and Inclusion Support

School Level

- Commissioning of Universal Health Services – SALT, OT, Physiotherapy
- Generic information, advice and guidance
- High Needs Funding for children and young people at SEN support
- Support from other LA services – Social Care, etc
- Schools have teams of support staff – TA'S, ELSA's, specialist interventions (eg- therapy programmes)

Inclusion and Outreach

- Targeted intervention to support Quality First Teaching and Ordinarily Available Provision
- Allocate and coordinate access to Outreach, Alternative Provision and other appropriate external agencies
- Multi – agency triage meetings to ensure collaborative approach to meeting the child's needs
- Ensure appropriate education by the 6th day following a permanent exclusion
- Monitor the progress of children in Alternative Provision to ensure provision is meeting the needs of the child and to identify mainstream readiness
- Support effective transition at key points within the child's education
- Access to Hospital School

EHCP

- Coordinate the statutory process for EHC assessments and annual review
- Ensure that children and young people with an EHCP receive appropriate provision and school placement to meet their SEN once identified through statutory assessment
- Work as part of a multi agency team to ensure a holistic approach to meeting children and young people's needs
- Coordinate the International New Arrivals Protocol for children and young people who move into Middlesbrough from outside of the UK

Case Studies Macey

- Macey is currently in Year 10
- Attended a mainstream secondary school
- When feeling heighten and dysregulated the school offered Macey a Bridge pass where she could access a quiet area to regulate and complete work.
- After listening to Macey's voice, a change of tutor group and classes to support Macey with friendships was made, however, this was not successful, and Macey was placed within the school's Personalised Learning Centre. There Macey was taught within a small class setting with two staff members.
- Macey had a phrased transition back to mainstream with Macey 'rag rating' her timetable so staff could support Macey around times that may be triggering for her. After several suspensions, it was agreed through discussions at regular PEP meetings with the wider care team including the Virtual School it was agreed Macey would benefit from further assessment of her needs to support in identifying an alternative provision which would meet Macey's SEMH needs.
- After a period of seven months of bespoke tuition agreed by the Care Team and offered through Virtual School, support and assessment including Thrive, use of the PACE approach and emotional coaching, regulation breaks, Macey being included in the planning process of her timetable and highlighted interests that she would like to experience, and they have been incorporated in her learning. Opportunities to work and socialise with other young people were provided and 10-15 minutes were offered at the end of the day to discuss successes, any worries and concerns and the plan for the following day. An alternative provision was identified which would offer a nurturing environment and bespoke education.
- After a phrased transition into the Alternative Provision Macey, and "Assess, Plan, Do, Review" (APDR) cycle undertaken which is a structured approach used to provide support through a graduated response it was agreed a request for assessment would be made and this has been submitted to SEN.
- Through a multi-agency approach between the Virtual School, AP provider, School, SEND, Inclusion and Social Care and by having an effective and regular collaboration, have responded to meeting Macey's needs. This ongoing collaboration and shared vision will support Macey with her aspirations attending college and becoming an actress.

SEND and Inclusion Priorities 2025

To develop **strategic leadership** across Education, Health and Social Care and identify and remove barriers to learning and support which have been a result of COVID.

To ensure **greater involvement of children, young people and families** to support coproduction and ensure that their voice is heard regarding the services and support they need.

To ensure greater analysis and use of information to ensure that there is sufficient **local educational provision** and to drive improvement in provision through the use of **data** and improve systems for capturing **outcomes** for children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

To further improve strategic planning to support **jointly commissioning** services across Education, Health and Social Care.

To improve processes and opportunities for children and young people in **preparation for adulthood.**

To have a **trained and competent** workforce in understanding how to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Work streams and task groups are in place to deliver on these priorities with regular reporting to the SEND Strategic Board.

Of particular importance is the Inclusion Partnership which is focussed on developing inclusion and reducing exclusion for children, with a focus on early identification and prevention.

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