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YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday 16 April 2026.

PRESENT: Councillors L Henman (Chair), Z Uddin (Vice-Chair), E Clynych, D Jackson and P Storey (Ex-Officio)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor V Cusworth (Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council)

OFFICERS: T Dunn, E Scollay, C Cannon, T Frankland, A Bates, L Grabham, A English, T Rudd and M Middlemiss

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor M Nugent & L Young (Ex-Officio)

25/36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

25/37 MINUTES - YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 22 JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 22 January 2026 were submitted and approved as an accurate record.

25/38 INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION COVERING THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO HOUSING, SUPPORTED LIVING, ETC.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services reported that, at the previous You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board, discussion had taken place regarding a move towards a thematic approach to future meetings. It was subsequently agreed that this meeting would focus on accommodation. Corporate parents had a responsibility to monitor the quality of accommodation, assess how effectively it met the needs of children and consider how provision may need to change.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

25/39 PRESENTATION BY ROSECROFT CHILDREN'S HOME

The Service Manager (Supported Accommodation Residential) and the Residential Manager were in attendance to provide Members with a presentation on Rosecroft Children's Home. Rosecroft was a home for children and young people. Boys and girls could live there between the ages of 11 and 17. Up to five young people could live at Rosecroft at the same time and most residents were from Middlesbrough but some may have lived in other places before arriving.

Board Members heard that Ofsted had carried out an inspection of Rosecroft in November 2025 and found the provision to be outstanding in all areas. Inspectors had commented on the positive relationships children had with staff who they trusted and said children felt loved and wanted.

Children at Rosecroft had been supported by staff through major life events such as bereavements and pregnancy and staff had recently received an invitation to a former resident's wedding underscoring the relationships they had with the children. The children demonstrated increased confidence and aspiration, feeling encouraged to excel in both their education and wider life.

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A Member queried what considerations were taken into account during the referral process to determine whether a placement at Rosecroft was the correct choice for a child. It was confirmed that Rosecroft's manager would review the referral information based on several factors such as the child's needs and an impact risk assessment would be carried out to identify any risks to the community and young person as well as strengths and how these would be managed.

Members praised the welcome pack highly which had been submitted as an appendix to the Board and highlighted the welcoming tone. It was queried how the pack was received by young people and how they generally felt when arriving at the home. It was advised that a transition plan was developed to prepare young people for moving and visits were arranged so they could spend time with staff. It was emphasised that moves were planned in line with each child's individual pace and needs. While some children preferred a gradual transition, others found the uncertainty of waiting difficult and in such cases a quicker move could be accommodated.

Members expressed an interest in understanding the range of accommodation available to cared for children in Middlesbrough and requested a breakdown of the different types and profiles of homes to be circulated to Members following the meeting. Clarification was also sought around how private children's homes fit into the wider landscape of provision.

The Board was advised that in-house placements were always first choice to explore but sometimes these were not suitable. The Residential Panel monitored and reviewed external placements and costs to ensure they were the right choice for the child. The Commissioning Team sourced and secured external placements where needed and matched a child to the most appropriate placement. Regulated placements were prioritised but there were situations where unregulated placements had to be used in emergencies or if no other suitable placements were available.

A discussion took place regarding the costs of private provision compared with Council-run homes, with the Director confirming that costs could vary significantly. Concerns had been raised at a national level about potential profiteering within the sector, which was being examined by central government. The Commissioning Team was keen to drive down costs, noting that local authorities were able to negotiate, as maintaining positive relationships with councils was beneficial for private providers.

A Member raised that there had historically been staffing problems in this area and queried whether this was still an ongoing issue. It was also asked whether the Council had any plans to open new homes in the future to increase internal provision. The Executive Member for Children's Services advised that the Executive had agreed to pause this work previously to focus on improving existing services but it was open to the idea in the future. It was agreed that staff recruitment and retention was an ongoing challenge due to the demanding nature of the job but was improving. There was currently one vacancy at Rosecroft.

AGREED that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. A breakdown of the different types and profiles of children's homes in Middlesbrough be circulated to Members following the meeting.

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HOMELESSNESS PROTOCOLS FOR 16/17 YEAR OLDS AND CARE LEAVERS

The Joint Homelessness Protocols for young people in Middlesbrough had been developed by Children's Services and Adult Health and Social Care with a plan to launch on 13 May 2026. Awareness sessions were planned to ensure colleagues were advocating for these young people. There were two protocols; one for 16/17 year olds and one for care experienced young people in Middlesbrough.

Members heard that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had advocated for local authorities to have these protocols in place, providing a clear direction of travel and a framework for support. It was acknowledged that the issue of homelessness and housing cut through many directorates and this had resulted in young people often feeling passed around between services, an issue that was important to the Council as corporate parents and one which the protocols would help with.

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It was continued that the number of homeless young people in Middlesbrough was quite small but the risk and potential for harm was significant for young people and this was an area of priority. It was highlighted that homelessness often came in different forms such as sofa surfing or having no permanent residence and social workers and other professionals worked very closely to support young people in these scenarios. 'Airbnbs' had become more commonly used however it was highlighted that this type of accommodation was not suitable for 16-17 year olds and needed to be reduced. Lots of work was being done to develop accommodation specific for young people and a key legal requirement of the Renters' Rights Act which would come into force on 1 May 2026 was for local authorities to conduct Supported Housing Needs Assessments and publish strategies by March 2027.

Several queries were raised regarding wait times for young people. It was noted that information could be obtained from Tees Valley Home Finder (TVHF) on the average wait times for care leavers once they were registered with TVHF, as well as clarification on the level of priority afforded to applicants who were care leavers.

A Member queried whether entitlements changed when a child turned 18 and it was confirmed that the nature of support changed and there were different types of accommodation tailored to individual needs, support levels and age. There could be complexities when children had friends and acquaintances of differing ages who were entitled to different provision and this could be challenging to manage at times.

Children's Services worked in close partnership with Adult Social Care as young people approached the age of 18, ensuring appropriate support was in place, with some cases requiring involvement from an adult social worker. These cases would be identified and flagged through the transitional panel.

It was paramount that appropriate preparation took place well in advance of a young person turning 18 to ensure that young people felt fully prepared for the transition. Social workers were being upskilled and equipped to support young people during this time.

AGREED that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. Awareness session dates be shared with the Board.
3. Clarification would be sought from Tees Valley Home Finder on the average wait times for care leavers once they were registered with TVHF and clarification on the level of priority afforded to applicants who were care leavers.

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ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

Members heard that the next meeting of the You Matter To Us - Corporate Parenting Board would focus on education, employment and training. Opportunities within the council and town would be discussed and ways in which our cared for and care experienced young people could make the most of the opportunities available. The Corporate Director and Chair would meet with the Volunteer Ambassadors ahead of the next meeting and planned to map out themes across the year and confirm potential guests. There would also be an annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board at the end of the municipal year to provide an overview of the Board's work.

One Volunteer Ambassador highlighted that education, employment and preparation for independent adult life were among the most important priorities to them. Support with financial planning and practical guidance, such as how to apply for a mortgage, were vital in giving young people strong foundations for a happy and successful transition into adulthood.

A Member added that the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board could be ambitious in its role in Middlesbrough. Potential opportunities could include careers fairs, engagement with local employers to explore prospects for young people and arranging workplace visits. Thirteen Housing's employability service was referenced and it was agreed that information around this would be shared with the group following the meeting. It was also agreed that the Corporate Director would contact colleagues within Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCLS) who provided learning, skills, apprenticeship and employability services to discuss their role and what they offered to young people.

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AGREED that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. Information around Thirteen Housing's employability service would be shared with the Board.
3. The Corporate Director of Children's Services would contact the MCLS service for further information on the support they offer to young people in Middlesbrough and feed back to the Board.