

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Date:** Wednesday 21st April, 2021  
**Time:** 4.00 pm  
**Venue:** Virtual Meeting

### AGENDA

Please note: this is a virtual meeting.

The meeting will be live-streamed via the Council's [Youtube channel](#) at 4.00 pm on Wednesday 21st April, 2021

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest  
To receive any declarations of interest.
3. Minutes- Corporate Parenting Board- 17 March 2021 5 - 12
4. Corporate Parenting Board Action Plan 13 - 14

The Democratic Services Officer will provide an update on the actions taken from meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

5. Covid - 19 Update  
The Director of Children Service's will provide a verbal update to the Board.
6. Voice of the Child/ Participation update 15 - 20  
The Head of Strategic Services will provide an update to the

Board.

The Board will also be introduced to the new Participation Officer.

7. MALAP spotlight- Update

The Chair will provide a verbal update to the Board.

8. Local Family Justice Board

21 - 32

The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting and Head of Legal Services (People) will provide a presentation to the Board.

N.B- An update presentation will be provided at the meeting, which will include up to date statistics.

9. Elevating young peoples' voices in digital resilience

33 - 38

The Risk and Resilience Manager will provide a presentation to the Board.

10. Introduction to the Fostering Annual report

The Head of Service- Future for Families will provide a presentation to the Board.

11. 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  
Tuesday 13 April 2021

**MEMBERSHIP**

Councillors A Hellaoui (Chair), T Higgins (Vice-Chair), J McTigue, M Nugent, Z Uddin, C Wright, J Walker and C Dodds

**Assistance in accessing information**

**Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Susie Blood, 01642 729645, [susie\\_blood@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:susie_blood@middlesbrough.gov.uk)**

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**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Wednesday 17 March 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors A Hellaoui (Chair), M Nugent, Z Uddin, C Wright and J Walker

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, V Banks, R Farnham, M Jackland, J McNally, S Butcher, R Scott, D Skaife, P Jemson and L Hunter

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors T Higgins, A High, J McTigue, M Smiles, J Thompson, C Dodds, R Brown, K Dargue, T Dunn, T Parkinson, P Rudd and Fenny

69 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Higgins, High, McTigue, Dodds and Smiles.

70 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor Walker	Non-Pecuniary	Agenda Item 8 – Chair of Linx Project Hemlington

71 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 10 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 10 February 2021 were read and accepted as a true record.

72 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 23 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 23 February 2021 were read and accepted as a true record.

73 **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ACTION PLAN**

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Board action plan.

The Chair added the following actions:

Health passports

Further clarification on progress of digital health passports.

Initial Health assessments (IHA)

Further information to be obtained regarding engagement with those reluctant to attend IHA's.

Mental health and Headstart

Further information on mental health engagement within schools to be brought back to a future meeting.

The Director of Children's Services outlined that as a fall -out from the Corporate Parenting Strategy, an action plan will be presented to the Board on a regular basis.

The Director also advised that a yearly Corporate Parenting Board work programme would be devised, which would ensure key statutory documents are presented to the Board and other items would be fitted into the work programme accordingly.

The Director also advised the Board that the Corporate Parenting Board Strategy had been formally signed off by Executive on 16 March 2021, who endorsed all matters included within the strategy.

#### **AGREED**

**That the action plan and addition actions be noted.**

74

#### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services provided a verbal update in respect to Covid 19.

The Director outlined that the directorate has stepped down the Bronze meeting, which was to look at specific aspects of Covid and the service has now operating as a covid business as usual, and fitting the practice through covid.

Children Service's staff are in the main still continuing to home working, although there are plans in place to slowly bring staff back into the office, however this will be blended with home working.

Face to face meetings taking place with the appropriate safeguarding measures in place, unless there are exceptional circumstances to prevent this (family are isolating or covid symptomatic).

All Middlesbrough schools returned on 8 March, which all schools staggering their year group returns over the week. Generally the return has gone well and children are happy to be back and eager to learn. In terms of our vulnerable children (those with a social worker, children in need, children on child protection orders and children looked after) the attendance has been very good and positive.

Schools are operating back working with their bubbles. There are some staff and pupils currently self -isolating, however the department received daily updates from Public Health on numbers.

In terms of mental health, the service was seeing a slight increase in referrals as well as those in respect to domestic abuse. They also has seen some numbers (although not has high as some local authorities) of elative home educating children. Whilst this was not affecting our looked after children, the Director felt the Board should be aware of this.

A Board member queries about Middlesbrough Council staff, in particular their sickness statistics, mental health and vaccinations.

In response, the Director advised that sickness was reasonably good. The service have to provide a return to the Department of Education on a fortnightly basis, including the number of staff who are unavailable. The figures compare well to the rest of the region and country, so there was no specific concerns.

In terms of mental health, the Council have provision in place to support those individuals. If staff feel their mental health would benefit from working at the office, this has to be authorised by HR and signed off by the Director. Staff in general are becoming covid weary and there is a great deal of willingness to return to the office. However staff have been adaptable and imaginative in their way of working.

In terms of vaccinations, these go in line with the national government age roll out, and therefore staff would not be called unless they are considered vulnerable. All residential staff and foster carers have been vaccinated due to their carer responsibility. All foster carers have been offered a vaccine and those wishing to be vaccinated have been.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

75

#### **MALAP SPOTLIGHT UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update in relation to the progress of spotlight 1 report. The Chair advised that at present, she was waiting to speak to officers/ Chairs of Corporate Parenting Board from other authorities and once this was completed, a report would be provided to the Board.

In terms of spotlight 2, a small group would be meeting on 6 April 2021 to discuss Care Leavers and NEETs. Feedback from this initial meeting would be discussed at the next meeting of the Board.

AGREED- That the updated be noted.

76

## **PARTICIPATION / VOICE OF THE CHILD UPDATE**

The Chair firstly welcome Phoebe Teasdale, one of the members of Middlesbrough's Youth Council. Phoebe provided the Board with the following update:

*Hi everyone, I firstly wanted to start by saying what an honour and privilege it is to talk to you all today about youth council, thank you for listening to me and giving me the opportunity to tell you about it. Youth council is a group of like minded young people from all walks of life across Middlesbrough who meet every other Thursday to discuss issues effecting our youth population and what we can do to make Middlesbrough the best possible place for young people to live in.*

*We have had quite a few meetings now and have already started to get things moving. Our first meeting was a get to know you session and we discussed what we wanted to get out of Youth Council and in our second we discussed our priorities. After completing a short google form we listed these priorities from most to least important and from there have developed an agenda to decide how to approach issues. Then we were given the opportunity to put ourselves forward to partake in certain roles such as the chair, the vlogger / blogger influencer and the minute taker. I personally applied to be the chair and ended up being chosen to chair a meeting in February. Our roles are on a rota which gives every young person an opportunity to give the roles a go and develops vital life skills such as teamwork, leadership, confidence, critical thinking and problem solving.*

*What makes Youth Council so good is the opportunities it provides to us young people. My dream and ambition is to go into Politics and Youth Council has given me and many others a place to express and debate our opinions and beliefs. We are currently working on improving Citizenship lessons in Schools across Middlesbrough and giving local businesses the MYC Stamp of Approval as an Incentive to work with us. Youth Council has given its members an opportunity to make amazing new friends and look forward to speaking to people that maybe don't go to our respective schools. This is particularly important in the current situation as many of us are quite lonely and feel isolated from others. Youth council has been an absolutely invaluable opportunity and one that me and my fellow members continue to enjoy every other Thursday. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to talk to you today and I would welcome any questions that you might have.*

The Chair and Board welcomed Phoebe's update and thanked her for her contribution.

Following Phoebe's presentation, the Chair introduced Paula Jemson, Head of Corporate Parenting and Looked after children to provide an overall update in relation to Participation.

### Middlesbrough Youth Council

- Numbers have dipped slightly (to be expected after the initial high turnout), but 16 young people are actively engaged and attended the last meeting.
- Young people are now assigned roles and this is going really well, the chair of the meeting has a meeting with Muskaan, Batool and me beforehand so they can practice/feel more confident- this worked well!
- Middlesbrough Youth Council priorities have now been decided, which were voted upon through the National British Council Council, they are as follows (most popular first):
 

-	A	Curriculum	for	Life	with	69%
-	Tackle	Child	Poverty	with		61.5%

- Increase racial awareness in the curriculum with 61.5%
- Free University with 53.8%
- Take Action on the Climate Emergency with 53.8%
- Middlesbrough Youth Council are linking in with Public Health and analysing the Curriculum4Life Service, that provides schools in the Tees Valley with PSHE lesson plans, in the last meeting they went over everything and gave brilliant suggestions. (next time, they will collate all their responses and contact Curriculum4Life with their recommendations).
- An MYC 'Stamp of Approval' was something the Youth Council wanted to do with businesses/programmes that provide services for young people. The idea was that it may incentivise their involvement, by giving the stamp of approval (the stamp is given when the services have been analysed and have been judged as being of a high standard to help young people.)
- Anonymous Feedback forms are now sent at the end of the meeting, so we can get some insight into what we can do to enrich members' experiences.
- One of our young people has said she would like to attend the next Corporate Parenting Board with Laurie
- They are all interested in meeting some of our Councillors to find out more about what they do.

#### Children in care Council/ Mini Children in Care Council

- In the past, engagement to this groups has been difficult and there are still low number. However the Participation Team are working together with Tia and Xavier (Care Leavers who are now apprentices with the Council) to increase engagement with the groups.
- Tia is interested in helping run the sessions
- Going to do a push to our Children Looked After to increase engagement (this will be done with support from the Participation Officer)
- 3 children are involved in the Children in care council and 1 child is involved with the mini children in care council, however there are recruitment campaigns underway to increase numbers.

#### Care Leavers

- Pathways CAHMS worker, John has taken on board a suggestion from the Care Leavers Forum (CLF) which was to create contact cards – he has created this and also added a 'what is a mental health crisis?' section on the card and contact details for the crisis line.
- John has also suggested that the CLF can have 5/10 minute mindful exercises that he will lead on and guide through - this was met with positive response.
- The CLF have come up with ideas for engaging more care leavers, such as them designing leaflets/letters to be sent to care leavers.
- They have also expresses interest in ensuring young people in residential placements (including those with additional needs) are aware of the CLF and have their voices heard.
- The existing leaflet has also been send to Pathways and Helen Dempsey is sending to PA's for them to signpost.

#### Next steps

##### Participation Officer:

- Marcus started with Middlesbrough Council in March 2021 and will be coming into post to help facilitate our improvement journey by ensuring the voice of the child is prevalent in Social Care.
- Marcus will also facilitate in the running of our young people's groups, and form a positive rapport with the young people (ultimately act as a role model)

##### Mini CiCC/CiCC:

- To increase engagement levels by working with Xavier, Tia and Marcus (new Participation Officer).
- To create an updated plan of action with support from Marcus/the work he is doing



with Practice Lead.

Care Leavers' Forum:

- To increase engagement with the support from Pathways
- To have the Forum more Youth Led, by Xavier and Tia deciding agenda items/presenting
- To increase mental wellbeing by doing short mindful sessions with John (Pathways CAMHS worker)

Youth Council:

- To continue with the Curriculum4Life work, get ducks in a row and contact the programme with their recommendations

Good News story

- Middlesbrough Council were successful in securing £30,000 to promote online safety for young people in Middlesbrough.
- Our Care Leavers' Forum were consulted and gave their experiences that were used in the bid.
- A number of staff were consulted with, and gave input to the bid- great example of collaborative working.
- The money will ultimately aid our young people in becoming more digitally resilient and ensuring digital inclusivity (ensuring all those who need access are given this).
- The above point is explained in our Digital Resilience Mission Statement: *"To develop an online world where children and young people can be nurtured, safe, self-confident and compassionate digital citizens"*.
- Finally, The Head of Service outlined that in terms of young people NEET, a NEET Task and Finish group in place to support looked after children in to education, training and employment.
- NEET panel commenced with engagement from Community Learning, Virtual Schools and Youth Offending Service to enhance multi agency support around young people
- Work underway to support apprenticeships within the council

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for her update.

**ORDERED- That the update be updated.**

77

**REGULATION 44 REPORTS**

The Service Manager for Future for Families provided a presentation in relation to Regulation 44 reports in respect to Future for families, Rose croft, Willow Tree, Gleneagles, Holly Lodge and Firtree.

The Service Manager covered the key themes which were brought out from the Regulation 44 visits.

The Service Manager outlined that the theme of the month was: How does leadership and management use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home?

From the visits the key themes were as follows:

1. Workforce development plans are comprehensive
2. Reg 45 reports are completed Bi-annually and shared with Ofsted – focus - Improving the services over the proceeding 6 months
3. Feedback from Professionals and staff is positive regarding the service offered to young people
4. Children and young people are involved in care planning
5. Risk assessments are robust and reviewed within timescales – including environmental assessments and Covid 19 assessments
6. The homes are well decorated, homely and well maintained

7. Staff training is provided in a timely way
8. Incidents are well recorded with clear actions – restraints are rarely used.
9. Young people's records are detailed
10. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to assess the risk of young people going missing
11. Staff have access to regular supervision

The Service Manager outlined that feedback from the Regulation 44 Officer was as follows "The service continues to have strong leadership with a clear vision and robust quality assurance processes in place"

**AGREED- That the regulation 44 reports be noted.**

78

## **FUTURE FOR FAMILIES - UPDATE**

The Service Manager for Future for Families provided a presentation to update the Board on the progress in relation to Future for Families.

The Service Manager outlined that this quarterly report was based on the data requirements set out in the Ofsted Fostering Data Set, which is a statutory return compiled using data as of the 31 March each year. The data returned for the statutory year 2019/20 has been included as a benchmark.

The table below defines each quarter. It also shows the date the data is collated for each 3-Month period.

Quarter 1 - 0April, May and June – (Data taken on the 30 June 2020)

Quarter 2 - July, August and September – (Data taken on the 30 September 2020)

Quarter 3 - October, November and December – (Data taken on the 31 December 2020)

Quarter 4 - January, February and March – (Data taken on the 31 March 2021)

The Manager provided the following update:

- The service have worked with 55 Young people since the service opened in September 2020.
- There are 16 young people on the edge of care who are receiving support from the service.
- There are 19 young people who are looked after who have a plan of return from external residential placements to family or foster care who are supported by FFF.
- The service have stepped away from 20 young people – the support offered by FFF has stabilised the placement and the service is no longer required.

The service regularly received Regulation 44 visits and received regular feedback from young people, their parents/ carers and professions. Some of the comments received in relation to the service are outlined below:

*"I like the hub the staff are lovely. My son has now got used to going there; it did take him a while. I feel he is getting all of the support he needs there. I have no problems with them at all and no suggestions; they're just lovely, they do all that they can". – Parent*

*"Staff listen to me and talk to me before this wouldn't happen in my last home". – Young person*

*"Xmas was mint given, even though I only came here a few days before! I was a bit down about not being with younger kids. The staff made me have the best time. I got nice presents." – Young person*

*"The member of staff working with a young person returning home was praised at how well they had built a relationship with a young person they are currently working with. And that the work is really valuable. – Allocated Social Worker*

*"I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for all the support you and your team*

*offered a young person. The situation had reached crisis and it was only down to the flexibility, support and commitment of you and your team, to young people that we were able to progress a safe robust plan. Since working in Middlesbrough I feel that your service has been invaluable in supporting the cohort of children we have been working with. This has not only improved outcomes for children and young people in Middlesbrough but also provided a valuable support the role of the SW team". –Director of Therapeutic Care Innovate Service*

The Service Manager finally outlined that the Futures for Families service was inspected by Ofsted on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The report has not been shared at this stage as it was currently being reviewed through Ofsted's Quality assurance process, however feedback at this stage was extremely positive.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

79 **THE FAMILY YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD BRIEFING**

Item deferred.

80 **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD SCORECARDS**

The Director of Children's Care and the Analytics Manager provided the Board with the Corporate Parenting Scorecards. From the Scorecards, the Board were made aware that performance was starting to show signs of improvement, with numbers moving in the right direction in key areas. It was very early days though and sustained improvements were still required in order to continue the positive trend.

Key themes from the scorecards were as follows:

- Numbers of children in care are coming down from a high of almost 700
- Ratio of children entering to leaving care has reduced to almost 1.1, from a high of nearly 2.0
- % of children placed more than 20 miles from their home postcode remains below 20%
- Positive performance independent reviewing officers (IRO) challenges resolved informally, or by Stage 1

Following the presentation it was agreed that the following would take place:

- Future updates on the scorecards would be brought to Corporate Parenting Board.
- That the scorecards include numbers/figures as well as percentages to provide the Board with a more accurate picture.
- That an explanation of each graph be provided to Board Members prior to the next presentation
- That fewer graphs be presented on the screen to allow ease to members.
- That the age range of children who have been adopted be brought to the Board
- That if possible a 'colour' aid e.g traffic light system be incorporated into the scorecards for ease of reference.

AGREED-

- That the scorecards be noted
- That the agreed actions as outlined above, be taken into account for future presentations.

**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAYBE CONSIDERED**

**PURDAH**

THE BOARD WERE MADE AWARE THAT DURING PURDAH, THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD WOULD OPERATE AS NORMAL.

ACTIONS- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Action	Responsible Director/Officer	Progress
<b>Action 1 (action from 17 September 2020)</b> Update on Future for Families	Rachel Farnham/ Paul Rudd/ Rob Hamer	To be updated every other meeting
<b>Action 2 (action from 17 September 2020)</b> <b>Foster Carer trends</b>	Paul Rudd/ Jennifer Rowan	Trend date to be presented to Board members on a quarterly basis.
<b>Action 3 (action from 28 October 2020)</b> Detective Chief Inspector 754 Deb Fenny to provide information on her role within neighbouring authorities Corporate Parenting Board.	Detective Chief Inspector 754 Deb Fenny	At a future meeting
<b>Action 4 (action from 14 December 2020)</b> Regulation 44 reports	Paul Rudd	To be reported at every meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.  Further discussion have indicated the reports will now be presented to every other meeting of the Board.
<b>Action 5 (action from 14 December 2020)</b> Audit of strategies/ governance for Corporate Parenting Board and positive achievements.	S Butcher	To a future meeting of the Board.
<b>Action 6 (action from 14 December 2020)</b> Covid -19 update	S Butcher	Update to be provided at every meeting (next scheduled meeting 21 April 2021)
<b>Action 7 (action from 17 March 2021)</b> Yearly programme for Corporate Parenting Board	S Butcher/ S Blood	To be provided at the meeting of the next municipal year.
<b>POST COVID</b>		
<b>Action 8 (action from 11 September 2019)</b> Visit to Adoption Tees Valley	Susie Blood- Democratic Services Officer	Future visit to be arranged- post Covid 19

ACTIONS- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Director/Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>
	Vicky Davidson-Boyd- Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley	

# Participation Updates

# Recruitment Changes

**Marcus is now in post as our Participation Officer, here are some of the things he will be doing to improve the lives of children in Middlesbrough:**

- **Will work closely with social work to ensure the Voice of the Child is embedded**
- **Will run the Children in Care Council groups**
- **Will increase engagement of these groups by speaking directly to young people that can be involved**
- **To ensure Middlesbrough Children know they matter by listening to their wishes and opinions**

**Recruitment is in process for the Participation Team Manager role previously held by Beth Bradshaw. The advert will go out next week.**

**The Care Leavers' Forum helped to write a job description and what they would like the candidates' qualities to be. This will be sent out with the advert.**



# Middlesbrough Youth Council

- In the latest meeting, the Council focused on team building and had a fun session.
- In the session the members took part in a quiz, played games, and had the opportunity to speak to other young people in breakout rooms, which went really well.
- We will do sessions like this on a monthly basis to have fun.
- Session times now last an hour as the young people felt that an hour and a half was too long.
- The most recent feedback form showed that the young people really enjoyed this session, and the majority voted it as a 5/5.
- In the next session, we are introducing Hot Topics suggested young people
- Chair role is changing slightly, with Muskaan (Middlesbrough's Member of Youth Parliament) being a compere and other young people choosing topics they'd like to lead on. They will be called Topic Managers.
- Chair role is changing to involve other less confident young people by them only leading a 10 minute topic rather than an hour meeting as this could be daunting for some.

# CiCC/Mini CiCC

- Working with Young People we will look at a rebrand and a name change for both councils

Participation Officer working within the council and with outside agencies in ways to engage more young people to both groups

# Care Leavers' Forum

- The CLF have come up with ideas for engaging more care leavers, such as designing leaflets/letters to be sent to care leavers.
- They have also expressed interest in ensuring that young people in residential placements (including those with additional needs) are aware of the CLF and have their voices heard.
- The existing leaflet has been sent to Pathways (the Leaving Care Service) and to Personal Adviser's for them to signpost young people to the CLF.
- Working with Pathways team to come up with a new term for "Direct Work"

# Next Steps

## Participation Officer:

- Increase participation in groups but also across all services
- Raise the profile of all the groups across the community

## Mini CiCC/CiCC:

- To increase engagement levels by working with the Care Leavers' Forum and Participation Officer.
- To create an updated plan of action with support from Participation Officer/the work they will do with Practice Lead.

## Care Leavers' Forum:

- To increase engagement with the support from Pathways.
- To have the Forum more Youth Led, by young people deciding agenda items/presenting.

## Youth Council:

- To continue with the Curriculum4Life work, get ducks in a row and contact the programme with their recommendations.

# Corporate Parenting Board Local Family Justice Board Presentation

Paula Jemson  
Ann-Marie Wilson





**Our mission is to show  
Middlesbrough children  
that they matter.**

# The role of the Local Family Justice Board (LFJB)

The **Family Justice Board** is the primary forum for setting direction for the family justice system and overseeing performance and was set up to improve the performance of the family justice system and to ensure the best possible outcomes for children who come into contact with it.

**Local Family Justice Boards (LFJB)** were established to support the work of the Family Justice Board by bringing together the key local agencies, including decision makers and front-line staff, to achieve significant improvement in the performance of the family justice system in their local areas.

The LFJB holds meetings on a quarterly basis and is attended by representatives of those that use the family justice system, including Local Authorities (Legal and Childrens Services), members of the judiciary, CAFCASS, private practice, Barristers, and the local police.

There are also subsidiary groups of the LFJB that look at specific areas such as :

- Local Public Law Working Group
- Local Private Law Working Group
- Police Disclosure Working Group

## Public Law Working Group –

### Recommendations to achieve best practice in the child protection and family justice systems (Published March 2021)

The PLWG was formed, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, to investigate the steep rise in public law cases coming to the Family Court and to offer recommendations for improving the system's ability to address the needs of the children and families.

In broad terms the objectives of the working group were to:

- i. recommend changes to current practice and procedure that may be implemented reasonably swiftly, without the need for primary or secondary legislation;
- ii. make recommendations to provide Best Practice Guidance.

In response to this, the paper, which was over 2 years in the making, was published in March 2021.

As part of the LFJB, Middlesbrough contributed to the paper by providing both an individual and a regional response to the draft recommendation, of which there were 47 interim recommendations, and 15 longer term recommendations.

In addition to the main paper, Best Practice Guidance was produced for the following areas:

1. Support for and work with families prior to Court Proceedings
2. Section 20/section 76 accommodation
3. The application and case management
4. Special Guardianship Orders

In response to the recommendations, and the Best Practice Guidance, the LA have set up a working group across Legal Services and Children's services to analyse the points, and where required, agree actions to implement.



## Local Public Law Working Group

There is a local public law working group which works collaboratively to identify issues that affected the local family justice system in regards to public law matters and to agree practical proposals to resolve.

Representatives from both Legal and Childrens Services attend and actively engage in the work carried out.

Most recent Project: Care Orders at Home – further to which three workshop sessions were held:-

The session was aimed at those working within the family justice system across Cleveland and South Durham

The sessions were agreed as part of the Local Family Justice Board to explore why in the Teesside area we have higher numbers of Care Orders with children placed at home or with connected carers

Aim: To work together to understand when we think Care Order's at home would be appropriate but also when we may challenge each other about this

Understand what the law tells us about Care Orders at home including what can and can't be done under a Care Order

Consider alternatives and specifically the Teesside Supervision Order policy

The outcome of the sessions will be fed back to the LFJB group to seek approval/agreement to any recommendations.

The next project for the Local Public Law working group is to be decided upon consideration of the contents of the recent March 201 paper.

# Middlesbrough Legal Services Childrens Team

Middlesbrough Council has an in-house team of lawyers who provide legal advice and support to children's services to carry out their statutory responsibilities.

Ann-Marie Wilson – Head of Legal Services (People)

1 x Senior Childrens Adviser (Part time)

4 x full time Solicitors

1 x trainee Solicitor

4 x Legal Assistants

1 x Court Progression Manager

# How can the Legal Services Childrens Team support improvements?

Overall objectives in terms of how the Legal Department can support Children's Services:-

- Be pro active rather than reactive by way of becoming involved in providing timely advice in regards to the decision making process rather than waiting for a crisis to occur
- Work collaboratively together from an early stage to resolve issues and provide support to the department.

## Examples of how this can be done:

- Attendance at effective legal planning/gateway panel
- Provide early advice when issues arise/attendance at Strategy meetings
- Attend early legal planning meetings
- To read draft documents such as assessments, statements, and care plans before they are filed and raise any issues in a timely manner
- Provide training to SWs ie around around threshold/risk, case law developments
- Input into strategies suggested by Children's Services
- Have regular reviews for cases which are in Court with the allocated fee earner
- Have a Care Planning meeting 2 weeks following issue, and 4 weeks before the final evidence is to be filed to consider all options based upon the evidence available, and the contingency plans.
- Have a clear escalation process in place for issues of challenge.

## Progress - Bloom Project/Cygnet

There have been issues with increased demand and reduced capacity across the Legal Services Legal Team and as a result LMT agreed to commission a 12 month Managed Project Service to support the team until March 2022.

Further to a procurement process – the project was awarded to Cygnet Family Law. **This means that a number of public law cases will be outsourced to Cygnet family law.**

**The impact of this is that** with increased capacity the Children’s legal team can contribute effectively to improving the quality of outcomes and supporting Children’s Services as outlined.

This will also allow time for future development work to be completed which will strengthen in-house delivery.

# Progress - Court Progression Manager (CPM)

As part of the improvement work connected to Ofsted, there was an identified need to bridge the gap between the Childrens Team in Legal, and Children's Services, and to improve the quality of court proceedings.

## **The purpose of this new role:**

To act as lead officer, working closely with Legal and Children's services, to ensure the timely progression of cases in family court proceedings.

## **Key functions of the role:**

- lead an effective partnership between Legal and Children's Services
- use expert communications skills to develop a shared understanding of objectives across both Legal and Children's Services
- working externally to develop and maintain relationships with the local judiciary to ensure practice standards are continuously met.
- responsible for a measurable improvement in the quality of court documentation
- to develop, implement and deliver a case quality framework and bespoke practice development to ensure Social Workers have the requisite skills to produce quality evidence
- act competently as a Social Work lead in formal case proceedings.
- manage the progress of pre proceedings cases to identify/take action to deal with any potential/actual exceptions that might jeopardise the achievement of required milestones,

## **Invest to save:**

The improvements sought will achieve better outcomes for children in a more timely manner, and therefore reduce costs by way of resources, for example improving quality of evidence – plans being right first time, reducing the need for further hearings, saving time for legal and Childrens services

The successful candidate has been appointed and will commence the role in May 2021.

# Middlesbrough Context

Middlesbrough currently have 128 sets of active proceedings in court involving 229 children:

- 101 care proceedings
- 9 adoptions
- 12 Discharge of Care Orders/SGOs
- 3 Deprivation on Liberty applications
- 1 Female Genital Mutilation Order
- 1 Revocation of a Placement Order
- 1 Section 34.4 Order to suspend contact

# Progress to Date:

702 Children were in Middlesbrough care in August 2020.

In the last six months we had 66 children have become Looked after children and 172 Children ceased to be looked after children. There are currently 563 children looked after.

In the last 6 months social care and legal have worked together to ensure that:

- Page 31 36 children have secured permanence and ceased to be looked after through the granting of a Special Guardianship Order.
- 26 children were made subject to adoption orders in the period between August 2020 and 31 March 2021. This is a 62.5% improvement on the full previous year score card. This equates to 5% of the current CIC Cohort.
- The number of children placed with parents has reduced from a high of 99 children in August 2020 to 68 in April 2021. In the past 6 months 21 children have ceased to be in a placement with parent arrangement due to revocation of a Care Order.

This has supported the reduction in the number of children looked after.

# Innovate – Commissioned Service

In Phase 1 Innovate were allocated 17 children in PwP placements.

Of the 17 young people allocated:

- 13 children now have secured permanence and Care Orders have been revoked.
- 1 application for revocation has been filed to court and a sibling group of 3 were assessed as unsuitable for revocation.
- To date Innovate have commenced 10 new placements with parent placements through work that they have been doing with children in connected carers placements and in residential care. Whilst this has increased the number of children in PWP placements these are positive moves for the children and will be closely monitored through the project and PMG to ensure revocation is progressed swiftly where appropriate.
- Progress will be tracked and there will be ongoing review with the legal services to progress through revocations proceedings in a swift manner.



## Corporate Parenting Board

**Date:**

**Title of report:** Successful Funding application – ‘Elevating young peoples’ voices in digital resilience’

**Purpose of report:** The purpose of this paper is to inform members Board of a successful bid for funding to consult, develop and implement a policy/guidance document in relation to ‘digital parenting’ in respect of Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

**Key Decisions -** To note the successful funding application  
To support the project and employment of an apprentice (ideally a Care Leaver)  
To agree to consider the final policy document, once developed.

**Date signed off by the Director of Childrens Services:**

11 March 2021

**Cabinet Member Portfolio Lead:**

**1. Summary report**

In February 2021, a funding opportunity was circulated by Parentzone and Nominet. By way of background, Parentzone is a national organisation which is widely recognised as ‘experts in digital family’ and Nominet is the UK’s official web domain registrar.

Middlesbrough Council submitted a bid under Design Challenge 3, the purpose of which is:

**Design Challenge 3: Elevating young peoples’ voice to influence the services that impact on their digital safety and opportunity Care experienced young people have invaluable insight which is currently under-used in relation to digital and online safety policy development.**

*To ensure care experienced young people can influence the service policies, process and practice that impact on their digital lives we need to extend participation and diversify and improve channels of communication and feedback.*

*Design Challenge 3 will award multiple grants between £10,000 - £30,000 depending on applicants reach and scale to be delivered for to 12-18 months*

Following consultation with key managers and officers an initial application was submitted requesting the maximum amount of £30,000. The application was accompanied with supporting statements from the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Deputy Mayor.

This bid was successful with funders making an offer of an additional £5,719 ( a total of £5719), to extend the project from 18 months to 2 years.

In essence the funding is to develop and implement a ‘digital parenting’ policy and practice guidance for Children Looked After and Children Leaving Care.

The funding will be used to employ an apprentice (**ideally a care leaver**), who will assist the Risk and Resilience Coordinator and members of the Participation Team to consult, develop and implement the policy/guidance document.

The document will be developed through consultation with Children Looked After and Care Leavers (including the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council), as well as with Social Workers, Foster Carers and staff in residential placements.

It is expected that the guidance will provide clarity and consistency regarding some legal issues that are emerging. For example, the confiscation of digital devices in some situations can be classed as a deprivation of the young person's liberty and repeated searching of social media and digital devices by Social Workers without consent or an authorisation under the Regulation of Investigative Powers Act (RIPA), could be illegal and a breach of a young person's right to privacy.

The development of this policy and guidance will bring together a high level of national, regional and local expertise to develop what will be an innovative document that will help provide digital resilience in Looked After Children and Children Leaving Care in Middlesbrough's.

Once developed, a draft policy document will be presented to the Departmental Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board for approval.

## **2. Background Papers and History of Decisions (where applicable)**

None

**3. Contact officer:** Jeff Watson, Risk and Resilience Manager

**4. Director responsible:** Rob Brown / Sue Butcher

**Jeff Watson - Risk and Resilience Manager**

Page 35

**Acknowledgement**

**Ralph Jordinson - Risk and Resilience Coordinator**

Our children are growing up in a world where there is an increasing need for them to flourish in their use of digital devices and where they need to interact in all areas of the digital world – e.g. School and Work based Apps, Social Media and Gaming

As corporate parents we need to ensure our children can compete for jobs some of which have not yet been invented.

At present the approach to Digital Parenting for CLA and those leaving care in Middlesbrough is inconsistent.

We have been successful in attracting £35,719 funding to:

*“ensure care experienced young people can influence the service policies, process and practice that impact on their digital lives we need to extend participation and diversify and improve channels of communication and feedback.”*

# Links to Middlesbrough's Current Model

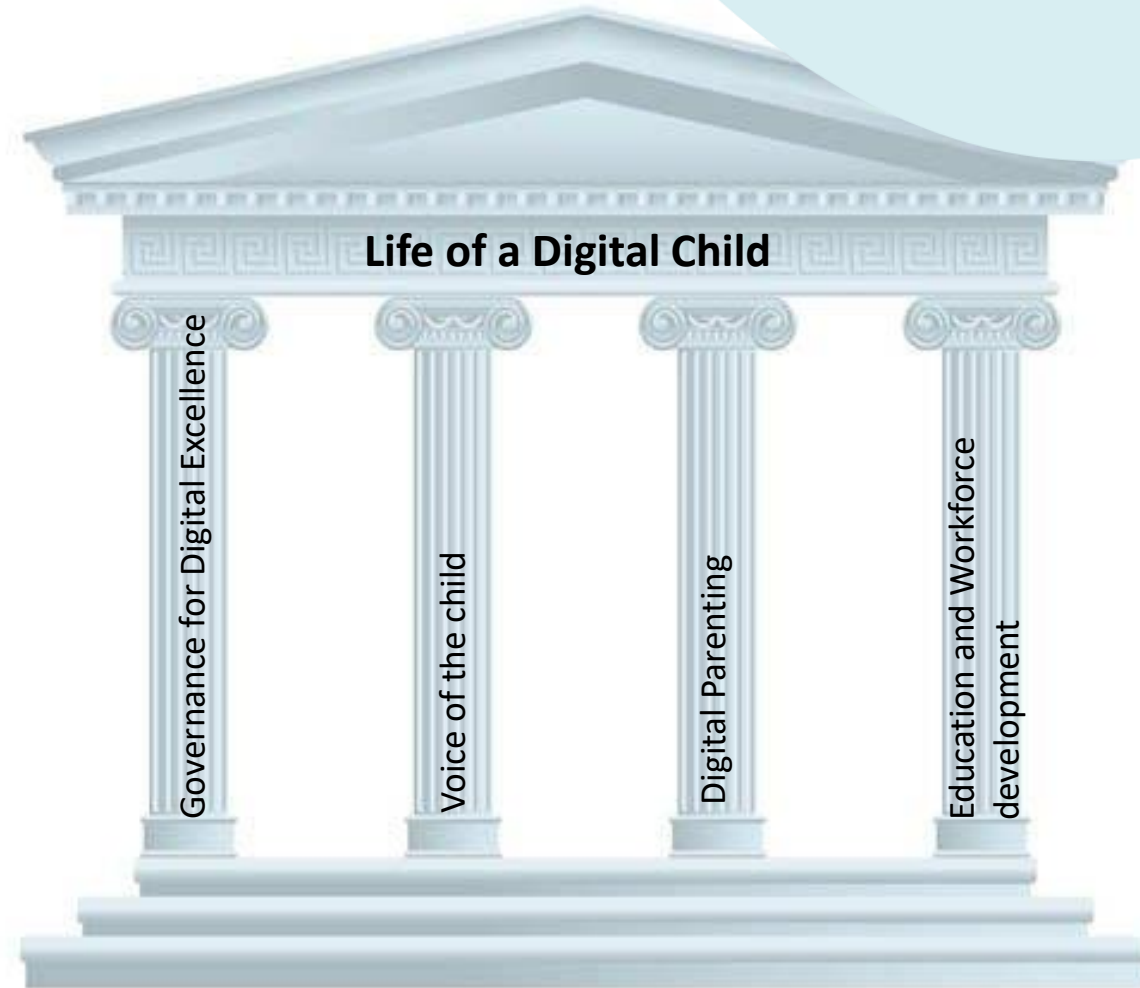
The Middlesbrough Digital Model was developed as a direct result of an initial Member's Scrutiny Report in 2016 and now informs work across the Tees.

The mission statement is:

*To develop an online world where children and young people can be nurtured, safe, self-confident and compassionate digital citizens".*

## The Four Pillars

1. Governance for Digital Excellence
2. Voice of the child
3. Digital Parenting
4. Education and Workforce development



**Middlesbrough's Digital Resilience Model**  
**Digital Resilience Framework**

In general terms the Project will:

- Employ an apprentice to be trained and to assist in this project
- Research and consult on current practice
- Research and consult nationally and regionally for Best Practice
- Develop a draft policy / guidance for Digital Parenting in respect of Children Looked After and those leaving care
- Consult on this draft
- Seek approval for the policy / guidance (DMT and CPB)
- Provide Nominet with the final document
- Implement the final policy / guidance through workforce development

Page 38

**Note:** Consultation will include, Children Looked After, Care leavers, Social Workers, Foster Carers, Staff in residential settings as well as the Departmental Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board.