

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Date:** Tuesday 14th September, 2021  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** Virtual meeting

**Please note this is a virtual meeting.**

**The meeting will be livestreamed via  
the Council's YouTube channel at  
[Middlesbrough Council - YouTube](#)**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest  
To receive any declarations of interest.
3. Minutes- Corporate Parenting Board- 20 July 2021 and action plan 5 - 16
4. Chair of Corporate Parenting Board- Verbal Update  
The Chair of Corporate Parenting will provide a verbal update to the Board regarding key discussions since the last Board meeting.
5. Covid 19 Update  
The Director of Children's Services will provide a verbal update to the Board.
6. Participation of Children and Young people  
The Head of Strategic services will provide an update to the

Board.

7. Review of the Permanence action plan 17 - 24  
The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting will provide a report to the Board.
8. Future for Families - Update 25 - 32  
The Residential Care Manager will provide a presentation to the Board.
9. Performance against Corporate Parenting Strategy  
The Analytics Manager will provide the Board with the performance scorecards.
10. Corporate Reference Group  
The Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services 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  
Monday 6 September 2021

#### MEMBERSHIP

Councillors D Davison (Chair), L Garvey (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, Z Uddin, C Wright, B Cooper and C Hobson

#### **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)**

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Tuesday 20 July 2021.

**PRESENT:** Councillors D Davison (Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, C Hobson, L Garvey (Vice-Chair) A Preston and J Walker

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:**

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, V Banks, R Brown, S Butcher, P Jemson, T Parkinson, P Rudd, R Scott, D Skaife, M Myrie, Beevers, S Bonner and S Chouhan

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Z Uddin, C Wright, K Dargue, T Dunn, R Farnham and B Cooper

21/93 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair received the apologies for absence.

21/94 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/95 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 21 APRIL 2021 AND ACTION PLAN**

The minutes and action plan from the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 21 April 2021 were read and accepted as a true record.

21/96 **COVID- 19 UPDATE**

The Director of Children's services advised that the Covid-19 update was agreed to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board, along with the two children's scrutiny panels as long as it was appropriate to do so.

The Director outlined that there had been a spike in covid 19 rates. Middlesbrough has an infection rate of 1,359.6 per 100,000 population and back on 21 April 2021 the infection rate was 26.2 per 100,000 population. This has had a significant impact on schools, the list of schools where bubbles have burst and staff are self-isolating has risen.

To date, 38 schools have had burst bubbles, 173 staff are self-isolating and 2,045 children are self-isolating.

In terms of staffing, the Chief Executive has advised that all staff must work from home, except unless there are exceptional circumstances and all council meetings, which do not require a decision will continue to be held virtually.

With the summer holidays and rate of covid, there is a need to keep an eye on service delivery to children and young people.

In terms of children looked after who are self-isolating, however the Head of Virtual Schools advised she would circulate a report to members in due course.

**AGREED-**

That the update be noted

**ACTION-**

Information regarding number of children looked after self-isolating to be circulated to Board members.

## **PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Chair welcomed the Head of Strategic Services and Participation officer to the meeting.

The Head of Strategic Services outlined that the participation work-stream has been a victim of Covid, as the suspension of physical meetings has had an effect on participation of children and young people nationally. Covid has affected how the Council has been able to progress the voice and influence and strategic planning. Children and young people have been involved in the past year with virtual learning so there was a degree of screen fatigue and therefore trying to engage outside school virtually has been difficult at times.

To conquer this, the team have redesigned the Participation Strategy, with the focus on recovery. To assist with this, the Head of Services had used vacant positions to resource a company called Participation People, who will work with the Council to deliver a year Participation Service for children and young people in Middlesbrough. Participation People deliver award-winning youth voice development & evaluation projects and training, with public and charity organisations across the UK. They have worked with/are continuing to work with other local authorities including Birmingham, Greenwich and Dorset and the Participation People contributed to achieving the highest election turnout in a seven year history of the Young Mayor scheme, standing at 73% of young people voting in the London Borough of Newham Council.

The Team have developed a road map and this will be delivered to the Participation and Communication Board, which will outline the key pieces of work to be undertaken.

Some of the work which Participation People will be involved in is as follows:

- Over the next 6 months, they will be working on a campaign to support our understanding of identity of young people and families in our town to improve the way the Council support them. Looking at “what makes me”, which was highlighted in the Ofsted Inspection report.
- There will be a focus on youth participation and engagement events that will be ran over the next 12 months for Middlesbrough Youth Participation champions and Corporate Parents.
- Re-design the engagement strategy to support how we can engage young people after lockdown.
- Strengthen the involvement of SEND children and young people and hard to reach group in all participation activities.

In terms of good news stories, the Head of Strategic Services advised the following:

- One of the Care Leavers, Xavier started his apprenticeship with Middlesbrough Council as the new Youth Training Development Officer.
- 2 of our young people from the Care Leavers Forum have been asked to join the Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel.
- Working closely with the SEN team to start developing a new SEN focus group for young people.
- The Participation Team are working with the Task and Finish group for NEET/Care leavers in order to make opportunities more available to our young people.
- Our young people did a great job attending the briefing for ‘Your Voice and Influence’ as part of ‘Our Middlesbrough Family Week’. They had lots of comments about how well they spoke.
- There was now an award dedicated to Middlesbrough Children Matter in the Civic Community Awards 2021.

The Head of Strategic Services brought the Participation Officer in to provide information to the Board on the participation groups (Children in Care Council (CICC) and Mini Children in Care Council (Mini CICC)).

He advised the Board of the following:

- There has been difficulty holding these groups due to Covid, however the first virtually meeting took place with 5 young people which was fun.
- Number are improving but they are waiting for face to face meeting and they are excited for this.
- Young carers have also shown interest in the Care leavers forum, but again they are waiting for the forum to be held face to face before they commit.
- Regardless of this, the Participation officer outlined that there has been more engagement from Young People in both groups through weekly phone calls and the Pathways Team have been working closely with the Participation Team to introduce care leavers to the forum.
- Some of our young people from both groups met with Ofsted during the inspection.
- More engagement from Social Workers and IROs passing on young people who may be interested in joining our groups.

#### Next Steps for CICC and Mini CICC

1. Continue to increase engagement working with others across Children Services who can refer young people
2. Start planning for our first face to face meeting
3. Agree on workshops that will take place once lockdown has finished
4. Start focusing on how we will make a difference across Children's Services by using the groups voice

#### Next steps for Care Leavers Forum

1. Continue to engage with new members who are interested in joining the forum.
2. Put together a proposal of events for Care Leavers Week
3. Plan how we want the group to run after lockdown

Following the Presentation, a Board member queried how many young people were involved in the participation groups. In response, the following information was provided:

- Youth Council- between 10 and 20 members
- Mini CICC- 5- 6 young people
- Care Leavers forum- 5 members with 3 consistent members.

The Participation officer outlined that the youngest young person they speak to is 8 years old and eldest was 24.

Outside the groups, the Team have been engaging with young people, through surveys in the schools. A Board member asked whether there were comparators e.g 5 children out of how many children looked after and also the questions asked in the questionnaires. The Head of Strategic Services outlined that this would be circulated to members.

A Board member also outlined that we should celebrate that young people are joining but we should look at different ways of how we can make the groups more appealing. However the groups made up a small part of the participation that was taking place.

In terms of apprenticeships, the Chair queried whether the Council kept in touch with our care leavers who hold apprenticeships and whether there was a possibility to offer more to care leavers.

The Participation Officer advised that there is a task and force group so we are aware of job opportunities and ensure these go out through the text and email service. The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting also advised that the group meet monthly to review all care leavers who are NETT and this is done in participation with virtual schools, community learning and youth offending service and additional partners. They group look at opportunities as well as apprenticeships.

In terms of social media, the team would be working with Participation People to find out what means/apps of communication they use and this will be rolled out with Middlesbrough young people.

The Care leavers forum have a whatsapp group, and the Voice of the Child have looked at setting up a social media plan e.g. facebook, twitter etc.

AGREED:

1. That the information be noted
2. That comparative numbers relating to CICC, Mini CICC and Care leavers be circulated to the Board.

21/98

## **PERFORMANCE FIGURES ALIGNED TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY**

The Analytics Manager was in attendance and provided the Board with information relating to the Corporate Parenting Board scorecard.

The main points to note were as follows:

### **Numbers and trends**

#### **CP1- Number of children in care in Middlesbrough-Trend**

- Children looked after numbers have vastly improved, dropping down below the 550 mark for the first time in 13 months and continue to decrease month on month.
- Children looked after were down 19% in comparison to the same point last year and 24% down in comparison to the highest number recorded in July-2020 at 692.
- In recent months between May and June this year Children looked after have decreased by 2.1%, below the 2020-21 target.

#### **CP2- Gap between Middlesbrough and Regional Children in care Rate per 10,000 – Trend**

- The rate of Looked after Children per 10,000 started to steadily decline in August-2020, recently reaching the lowest rate in 13 months at 56.51 - a 8.4% decrease in comparison to the same point last year.
- Though still remain above all external benchmarks, we are showing significant improvement.

#### **CP3. Ratio of children entering to leaving care – Trend**

- The ratio of children starting a period of care was showing a steep decline, while those ceasing a period of care is showing a sharp increase. The ratio of children entering to leaving care was down by 81% in June-21, in comparison to the highest point in Aug/Sept-20. The current value is below the 2020-21 target.

#### **CP4. Proportion of total CS budget spent on CiC services – Trend**

- The proportion of total Children's Services budget spend on Children in Care services has improved significantly since Sept-20 at 79.40%.
- Though in comparison to Q4 2020-21 the proportion has increased by 1.4% in Q1 2021-22, remaining above the 2020/21 Target by 3.3%.

#### **CP5. FTE Caseloads between 15-20 – Trend**

- FTE Caseloads between 15-20 reveals the peak caseload % was in January - 2021 at 41.80%, still 2.9% below the 2020-21 target.
- The steady decline started in February -2021, slightly peaking in May- 2021, improving to 28% in June-21.

**Permanency****CP6. Average number of weeks children spend in care (Ceasing Care in Month) – Trend**

- The average number of weeks' children spend in care displays peaks in January 2020, with the highest recorded in Aug-20 at 361.00, a 162.45% difference between the lowest number of weeks recorded in June-2020.
- Since the peak, the average number of weeks have improved, falling below the 2020-21 Target. This highlights the positive turnaround for children in care, with increases in those ceasing care month-on-month.

**CP7. % of CiC where plan of permanence has been ratified – Trend**

- The % of children in care where a plan of permanence has been agreed gradually increased month-on month, recently exceeding the 2021-21 target by 4% in June-21. This highlights that the timeliness of permanence agreements are significantly improving.

**CP8. % of permanence arrangements resulting in Special Guardianship Order (SGO) – Trend**

- The % of permanence arrangements resulting in SGO was above the 2020-21 target, 20%, across all recorded months. The highest recorded % was in November-2020 at 30%, a 6% difference in comparison to June-2021 at 24%.

**CP9. % of Children in Care placed with parents on care orders at home – Trend**

- The number of Children in Care placed with care orders at home exceeds the 2020/21 target across all months, peaking in Sept-2020 at 15%. In recent months the % has slowly declined, reaching the lowest in June-21 at 11%, a 2% decrease in comparison to 13 months prior.

**CP10. % of CiC secured in adoptive placements VS % of Children Adopted – Trend**

- The number of children that secured an adoptive placement remains relatively stable, reaching 4% in July/Aug-20. The significant improvement of CLA numbers in the last 6 months has had an impact on the slight decline in both the number adoptive placements and the number of children adopted.

**CP11. Average time in days between entering care and placed in adoptive placement-Trend**

- There was no data due to ALB who do the data for the country had changed the indicator, and therefore there were finding a slightly different indicator and would report at the next meeting.

**Sufficiency and Placements****CP12 % of CiC placed outside of 20 miles of home postcode - 12 Month Trend**

- The % of children in care placed outside of 20 miles of home postcode remained above the 2020-21 target, 15%. The % remained relatively stable ranging from the lowest recorded % in Nov/Dec-2017 at 17% to the highest recorded in June-21 at 20%. The average % of children in care placed outside of 20 miles of home postcode averages at 18% over the last 13 months.

**CP13 and CP14 - 12 Month Trend (% of Children in care placed in in-house foster placements VS % of Children in care placed with Connected Carers)**

- The % of children in care placed with Connected Carers continues to be the higher % of placement types, accounting for 21.8% of all CLA placements in June-2021. Though the % of In-house foster carer placements showed a steady improvement since Feb-20, reaching 21.7% in June-2021 - only 0.1% difference

when comparing to Connected Carers. Both placement types began to outperform the 2020-21 targets in May-2021.

#### **CP15 and CP16 - 12 Month Trend (% of Children in care in residential placements VS % of Children in care in external residential placements)**

- The % of children in residential placements and external residential placements remain above the
- 2020-21 targets across all recorded months.
- The actual number of residential and external residential placements has remained stable but increased as a proportion of the overall CLA total, which itself is decreasing dramatically.
- The % Children looked after in residential placements has reached 14% in June-2021, a 1.6% increase in comparison to 13 months prior, and the % of external residential placements reached 9.3%.

#### **CP17. % of CiC in single placements in last 12 months - 12 Month Trend**

- The % of children in care in single placements in the last 12 months has remained below the 2020-2021 target in all months recorded, other than in March- 2021 when the % peaked to 85.5% - 15.5% above the outlined benchmark.
- The % declined since the peak, reaching 64.9% in June-2021.

#### **CP18. % of Care Leavers remaining with former foster parents – Trend**

- The % of Care Leavers remaining with former foster parents began to gradually improve in March-21, recently reaching the highest % recorded in May-2021 at 13.1% - a 2.1% increase in comparison to 13 months prior.
- Care Leavers remaining with former foster parents slightly declined in June-21 but still remains above the 2020-21 target.

#### **CP19. % of CiC/CL placement breakdowns in last 12 months**

- The % of children in care/care leaver breakdowns in the last 12 months seen a considerable decrease
- since Jan-21, reaching the lowest recorded in May-2021.
- The % increased in June-21 by 0.7%, though this could be due to the increase in Care Leavers and
- Children looked after ceasing care.

#### **Quality and Impact**

#### **CP20. % of FFF young people who were on the edge of care and did not become Looked After**

- The % of FFF young people who were on the edge of care and did not become CLA has been relatively stable, with a steep decline in Nov-20 when the number of children in care was relatively high.
- In recent months the % has been 100% - 20% above the 2020-2021 target.

#### **CP21. Number of IRO challenges resolved at Stage 1 or 2 (i.e. informally or first formal stage)**

- The number of IRO challenges resolved at Stage 1 or 2 was extremely low in September-2020, and has seen steep increases across recent months - reaching 100% in December-2020, February-2021 and April-2021.

#### **CP22. % of Post 16 Children in care in Education, employment and Training – Trend**

- The % of Children in Care Post 16 in EET continued to improve in recent months, reaching the highest % recorded in April-2021 at 70%, since declining 1% in May/June-2021 which still remains above the 65% 2020-2021 Target.

#### **CP23 - % of Care Leavers in Education, employment and Training - Trend**



- The % of Care Leavers in EET remained relatively stable across all recorded months, until Nov-20
- when the % started to decline - reaching the lowest % in March-21 at 39%.
- However the % increased by 4% in June-21, at 43% - remaining below the 2020-21 Target.

#### **CP24 - % of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation – Trend**

- The % of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation out performed the 2020-21 target from November to December 2020 - reaching 96%.
- This was followed by a slight decline in March- 2021, reaching 86%, which increased by 3%, to 89% in June-21.

The Manager was thanked for this presentation, following which a number of questions were raised:

Firstly a member queried why single placements had increased. In response, the Director advised that generally it was usually if the child had complex needs. Sometimes being in a group isn't for the child and the emotional, health and wellbeing of the child and young people was paramount.

With regards to Children and young people being placed 20 miles away, the Chair queried what was being done to address this. The Director advised that wherever possible, the Local Authority try to place children in Middlesbrough and are trying to recruit foster carers. Middlesbrough do have their own children's homes as well as future for families (edge of care to prevent young people entering care) and Daniel Court (9 beds for young people). A child or young person may have to be placed outside the areas due to their needs, however this would require Director approval. Middlesbrough has been successful in bringing back some young people into foster placements with the help from Future for families and Innovate.

Future for families have been working with Innovate have looked at the number of children and young people who have been placed outside the area but can be returned to Middlesbrough. Future for Families currently have 3 young people living in the Hub and are working for 43 young people who they are working with to try and prevent them entering care.

A member queried what proportion of foster carers working with Middlesbrough live outside the borough and it was advised that this information would be provided at a future meeting.

Another Board member enquired about staff within social care, in terms of their Caseloads./ welfare of staff/ satisfaction rates of social workers

In response, the Director advised that there were currently three managed teams, the first aligned to the looked after children service, and the others assigned to assessment service and are working to help reduce numbers of caseload numbers. Caseload numbers have come down for some social workers, average caseload was 19.6 but within the Children looked after it was slightly lower between 15 and 19. Caseloads were regularly reviewed.

The Council do have agency workers however most recently had launched a workforce development strategy and within the Strategy, there was a section on recruitment and retention. The Council were looking for experienced social workers and have factored in a golden hello to ensure our salary was matched with neighbouring authorities and after a year they fall in line with the retention wage.

A question was raised as to whether it would be possible to take on apprentice social workers, who would then become experienced social workers. In response, the Director outlined that Middlesbrough do grow their social workers and welcome talented people and who have resource workers who are talented. However due to the complex cases, it was not possible to address this was possible.

Lastly, the education of our children looked after was posed and the Head of Virtual Schools, advised that during Covid, children have continued to attend school and most thrived having the smaller ratios during lockdown. Key stage 4 and GCSE results would be analysed and sent to the Virtual school government body prior to being presented to the CPB.

**AGREED- That the date be noted.**

21/99

## **MIDDLESBROUGH FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT**

The Head of Residential Services provided an overview of the Foster Carer data set for 2020/21. He advised that the report sent to the DFE was huge and therefore the information has been streamlined, however if members wished to have the full report could be sent to Members if required.

The Residential Manger provided details in relation to the following:

- Fostering Households – as of 31 March 2021 there were 145 number of households and 264 places.
- Fostering Households by Care type- the Board were advised that those offering longer term placements had reduced and this was part of the recruitment strategy in the future, this included speaking to short term foster carers regarding their terms. There was an increase of foster to adopt and work was underway with a number of connected carers who had a special guardianship order (SGO)
- Number of households approved in the year (and trend)- see above
- Placement use at 31 March 2021- there were currently 160 children placed with foster carers; 45 vacant places; 55 places not available (due to needs of the child or illness of foster carer) and 4 short break placements.
- De-registrations in the year and reasons- 2 foster carers de-registered last year as they decided to care for the children for longer term under a SGO; 11 foster carers left the service or to work in other areas; 11 left due to standard of care issues. The average of de-registrations is about 10% so Middlesbrough is slightly higher, however this could be down to a number of issues.
- Application in the year by status
- Number of not available places at 31 March 2021 and reasons- key information regarding
- Number of Carers at 31 March 2021 by ethnicity- foster carers are predominantly white British (235 out of 248 foster carers) however part of the recruitment strategy was to recruit foster carers from other ethnicities.
- Number of Carers at 31 March 2021 by training status- the training for foster carers has gone from strength to strength. There had been 199 work books completed and the service have developed their own training offer and since this going live there have been 380 courses completed by foster carers. There was a robust training offer and the service was now looking at designing further training surrounding life story work etc.
- Complaints- there had been 1 complaint which was not upheld, this was dealt with swiftly.
- Allegation- 6 allegation were raised (4 made by children and 2 made by other sources)
- 

The Manager finally stated that he wanted to praise the foster carers during the last 18 months due to the unprecedented pressure covid-19 had placed on them. He advised that nationally foster carers numbers were low, however Middlesbrough was working with their partners in practice in North Yorkshire at ways they recruit foster carers and there was currently a recruitment campaign in place.

The Manager had also met with the Commissioner, who had provided details of local authorities who were seeing an increase in foster carer numbers (Wakefield and Bradford for example) and Middlesbrough were in conversation with them. There was a shortfall in foster carers for those to care for a child with disabilities; teenagers ; children unaccompanied and sibling groups and the service was currently looking to recruit foster carers to the Future for families service. As part of the medium term financial plan, there would be an increase in child age allowance to support foster carers.

In terms of marketing, there were adverts in Jobs North East, Twitter, facebook

lovemiddlesbrough magazine, discussing with a foster carer to speak on the radio and a social worker wrote an article regarding what it is like to be a foster carer for the lovemiddlesbrough magazine.

The Manager outlined that after discussions with their partners in practice in North Yorkshire, they would be focusing their recruitment in September and January. Middlesbrough have a 16.2 % requests but nationally recruitment for foster carers are low- it was the same trend across local authorities and private adoption agencies.

A Board member also outlined it would be useful to have something to give to prospective foster carers ( a news article or a poster). She advised that care leavers were looking at developing feedback forms and it may be useful to put feedback/ stories from foster carers into a booklet. This idea was applauded by the Board and further discussions would take place.

The Chair thanked the Manager and Board Members for their contributions.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

21/100

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

### **Ofsted Focus Visit**

The Director of Children's Services advised that there had been an Ofsted Focused Visit and the report was published on 15.07.2021. The Director outlined she would circulate a presentation to Board members and if there were specifics that the Board members wishes to focus on, this could be added to the agenda going forward.

The visit was conducted by 4 social care and 1 educational inspector , who looked at the service with a covid lense.

They were generally pleased with the Local Authority had dealt with the situation and Middlesbrough had put in place the major incident plan swiftly and we put in place new ways of working across the Council.

There were some positive comments made in relation to partnerships, especially the way the local authority engaged with schools , however there were comments made that the Local authority need to understand more about children missing from education.

In terms of main findings:

- Demand for children's services has steadily increased over the past year
- Front door work has improved.
- Inspectors provided positive comments in relation to our work with children and the relationships with children and young people in terms of care leavers.
- Social work is focused.

In terms of improvement:

- We have Variability in practice
- Lack of suitable foster placements in children's homes but this is external.
- too many care leavers in NEET

There was a significant focus on Education and the Inspector stayed focused mainly on virtual schools.

There looked to ensure that children were in registered provision, rather than unregistered and that 2 children had their appropriate education provision.

The visit was varied and they inspectors looked at SEND provision

There were two additional recommendation from the focused visit, which were additional to the recommendations made at the full ofsted visit which are being worked on regularly.

Firstly, we needed Management oversight for those vulnerable children and those with special needs and secondly, the Local Authority need to focus on the identity of children and young people and their diverse needs.

**Next steps**

The Commissioner had been working with Middlesbrough over the past week and would be writing to the Minister. Initial feedback was positive.

Looking towards an Ofsted Monitoring visit which would come at the end of the year/ early 2022.

**Corporate Reference Group**

The Director of Children's Services outlined that the group which is Chaired by the Chief Executive which looked at two aspects. The first looks at how all the Council Directorates can contribute to children's improvement agenda and there is a plan in place. Secondly, how the Council can revise Middlesbrough Children Matter, so that there is a whole council commitment. The Chief Executive outlined that they thought they had a set of outcomes which they thought were correct for children and young people, however young people need to be the leaders on this and there was a plan for consultation in place, so that they were written in a child/young person friendly way.

This was due to be considered by the Executive in October 2021 for political sign off and it was outlined that this would be brought to the Board in the next meeting for input.

**AGREED-**

- That the information be noted.
- That the Chief Executive provide a presentation to the Board at the next meeting.

ACTIONS- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD (14 SEPTEMBER 2021)

Action	Responsible Director/Officer	Progress
<p><b>Action 1 (action from 14 December 2020)</b> Audit of strategies/ governance for Corporate Parenting Board and positive achievements.</p>	<p>S Butcher</p>	<p>This will be discussed through performance reports and actions of the Corporate Parenting Board Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Action 2 (action 21 April 2021)</b> Elevating the voice of young people</p>	<p>J Watson/ R Jordinson</p>	<p>Update to be provided January 2022</p>
<p><b>Action 4 (action from 11 September 2019)</b> Visit to Adoption Tees Valley</p>	<p>Susie Blood- Democratic Services Officer Vicky Davidson-Boyd- Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley</p>	<p>Future visit to be arranged accordingly. Due to Covid- 19 restrictions this has not been able to take place.</p>

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# Permanence Action Plan Highlight Report August 2021



## 1.0 Ofsted November 2019

In November 2019 Ofsted reported that:

- Middlesbrough has a particularly high rate of children in care against national comparators, and this level was increasing.
- Children are experiencing longstanding neglect come into care too late, and decisions for them to do so are made in response to a crisis
- There are serious delays in achieving permanence for most children in care.
- Early permanence is not prioritised for children in Middlesbrough, and there is a lack of parallel planning, which creates delay in achieving stability. There are missed opportunities to place children early for fostering for adoption
- Children subject to care orders have lived at home for several years, without timely and purposeful review of whether the Care Order is still required.
- Children experience significant delay in securing permanence through adoption.
- Too many changes in social workers also affect the quality of decision-making because new workers do not know children well enough to be confident about the plans that are proposed and agree to changes at short notice.
- When children's placements become fragile, there is a lack of coordinated support for both children and their carers to prevent disruption. Some children, including very young children, have experienced too many changes in placement before their permanent placement is identified.
- Family arrangements are pursued sequentially, and for too long, when children cannot live at home.



- There are delays in securing special guardianship orders for connected carers, although the support provided to many of these arrangements is good.
- Insufficient attention is given to ensuring timely care planning, particularly for very young children.
- Senior management panels and inconsistent legal advice provide insufficient scrutiny for understanding children's experiences and to ensure that their needs are met in a timely way.

## 2.0 Our Response

The Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children and Young People in Middlesbrough was presented to and signed off by Corporate Parenting Board in December 2020.

The strategy sets out our vision and action plan for how the Council and our partners will support children and young people who are in our care, and our care leavers, to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives. Transforming our approach to corporate parenting.

Our Permanency Action Plan for Children and Young People was developed in consultation with partners and is built around the six permanency priorities set out in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. The action plan defines how Children's Social Care will achieve the vision.

Our Permanency Action Plan will be systematically reviewed and updated as actions are completed, towards achievement of the priority outcomes we have identified over the 3-year cycle of our plan.

The overall responsible Council officer for the Permanency Action Plan for Children and Young People is the Director of Children's Services (DCS). For each of the six priority themes, a senior Council officer has been delegated by the DCS as the accountable lead for maintaining an overview of the priorities set out in the action plan.

### Themes and Responsible Officers

Theme		Lead Accountable Officer
1	Strengthening Permanency in Our Social Work Practice	Ben Short
2	Growing Our Multi-Agency Partnerships for Permanency	Siobhan Davies
3	Reducing Drift and Delay for Achieving Permanency	Paula Jemson
4	Strengthening the Voice of Children and Young People in Permanency	Siobhan Davies
5	Improving the Way we Capture and Use Our Data for Permanency	Paula Jemson
6	Supporting Permanency in Education, Employment & Training	Victoria Banks and Paula Jemson

### 3.0 Progress Against Each Theme

#### **Theme 1 - Strengthening Permanency in Our Social Work Practice**

- Practice Standards have been signed off and launched to the workforce
- Permanency Pathway is developed and ready for sign off and launch
- Legal Gateway Panel relaunched with a new terms of reference
- A Legal Gateway Tracker is in place to progress and track care proceedings
- The Practice Model has been designed and launched to the workforce
- Strengthening Practice have been commissioned to deliver a comprehensive Permanence training programme to the workforce
- Permanence Month arranged to deliver updated procedures and internal practice guidance to staff
- The Supervision Policy has been reviewed and updated
- Permanence Guidance has been written, signed off and circulated to the workforce identifying all permanence pathways
- Procedures for all permanence practice and pathways are being updated and relaunched and in various stages of completion
- A Workforce Recruitment Strategy has been developed and is awaiting Corporate approval to support the recruitment of a stable workforce

#### **Theme 2 - Growing Our Multi-Agency Partnerships for Permanence**

- Placement Stability Guidance written and shared with the workforce

- There is strengthened partnership working with Adoption Tees Valley, including the joint recruitment of an Adoption Panel Chair
- Strengthened joint working with Virtual Schools. Weekly reviews of children absent from school or without adequate education
- Governance agreed and forward work programme for the progress of the plan to be reported to Corporate Parenting Board
- Process of assessing for post adoption support has been developed by Adoption Tees Valley and signed off by the adoption leads across the Tees Valley

### **Theme 3 – Reducing Drift and Delay for Achieving Permanence**

- Family Group Conferencing is now an established part of pre-proceedings, ensuring that family arrangements are considered at an earlier stage.
- Adoption procedures have been reviewed and amended to support timely assessment, matching and progression of the pan of adoption – awaiting sign off.
- Special Guardianship procedures have been reviewed and updated to support timely assessments, placement and post order support – awaiting sign off
- The terms of reference for Permanency Monitoring Group have been reviewed
- Permanency Monitoring Group is well embedded and supported by the Fostering team, Review and Development Unit and Adoption Tees Valley. This is successfully tracking all children from Care Order to permanence
- Commissioned social work team in place to support children to achieve permanence in a timely manner.

### **Theme 4 – Strengthening the Voice of Children and Young People in Permanence**

- Life Story Tool kit has been devised by Practice Leads and launched
- 40 staff are due to be trained in the delivery of life story work in October 2021
- Commissioned Service is in place to develop participation for looked after children and throughout the council – Participation People. The team will consider how young people are involved in changes to policy and practice.

### **Theme 5 – Improving the way we use and Capture Data for Permanency**

- Permanence Tracker has been developed and signed off and is used to drive effective permanence planning
- Legal Tracker developed and effectively used to track progression of all court cases
- Project manager in place to maintain the tracker

- Court Progression Officer appointed to ensure timely progression of court proceedings
- Legal Pathway has been launched on the LCS system to allow for more sophisticated performance reporting, tracking and management oversight
- LCS transformation programme has developed a pathway for Connected Carers and Special Guardianship Orders to allow for more sophisticated performance reporting, tracking and management oversight
- Permanence dashboard and score card is in the process of being developed

### **Theme 6 – Supporting Permanence in Education, Employment and Training**

- Middlesbrough School Moves Policy has been revised and launched.
- Virtual school have delivered training to staff regarding social work contribution to Personal Education Plans during Practice Week.
- Further Hot Topic sessions are scheduled for October.
- Training scheduled for Designated Teachers in October regarding the role of education as Corporate Parents.
- Strengthened joint working with the Virtual School has led to weekly reviews of children absent from school alongside health and social care.

#### 4.0 Impact/Performance/Data

There has been an 23.5% reduction in overall numbers of children looked after since August 2020

Since the height of 702 looked after children in September 2020, there has been a reduction of 165 looked after children.

163 children and young people have ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months.

The 20/21 adoption score card evidences that the in the 12 months leading up to 31 March 2021 the average number of days between Placement Orders and Adoption Order has reduced to 189 days. The 3 year average is 323 days.

There is a 56% increase of number of adoption orders in the year 20/21 (25) compared to 2019/2020 (16).

In this year to date 13 Adoption Orders have been secured.

There are currently a further 33 children progressing to adoption with Placement Orders

Since Jan 2021 there has been 54 Connected Carers placements commence and 114 cease

The number of children in Connected Carers placements has dropped from 210 in Sep 2020 to 112 July 2021. (47% reduction)

The number of children placed with parents has dropped from 99 in September 2020 to 58 in August 2021. (41% reduction)

Since Jan 2021 there has been 17 Placement with Parents commence and 51 cease

There is an increased number of children in Fostering to Adopt placements

Children progress though pre proceedings in a more timely way.

**The Commissioner reported in July 2021 on progress made and identified that:**

***"Within the permanency strategy considerable progress has been made in the tracking and oversight of children within the care system. This has led to impressive performance in timely moves for more children into adoptive placements and a significant increase in the use of special guardianship etc. We also see evidence of more appropriate use of Public Law Outline, a reduction in emergency hearings and a stronger relationship of trust is described with CAFCASS (Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Services)"***

## 5.0 Risks

- The increase in demand across the service and across the tees valley region
- Staffing instability across the looked after and care leaving service could impact on performance and leads to children experience multiple social workers.

## 6.0 Next Steps

- Data Team to develop a Permanence Dashboard and Score Card – Performance and progress to be reported to Improvement Board and Corporate Parenting Board
- Life Story Work compliance and quality to be driven
- Reduction and tracking of the number of children residing in external residential placements

- Progress the Permanence Action Plan and report to Improvement Board and Corporate Parenting Board
- Develop further practice standards for Placement with Parent/Special Guardianship Orders and Reunification
- To continue to work with Partners in Practice to develop improved fostering processes

**Owner – Rachel Farnham, Middlesbrough Council, Director of Children’s Social Care**

**Author – Paula Jemson, Head of Service for Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting**

# HOW FUTURES FOR FAMILIES HAS IMPACTED ON THE WIDER SYSTEM CHANGE IN MIDDLESBROUGH

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Aug 2021



Agenda Item 8

# Changing the Culture

## FUTURE FOR FAMILIES HUB MODEL

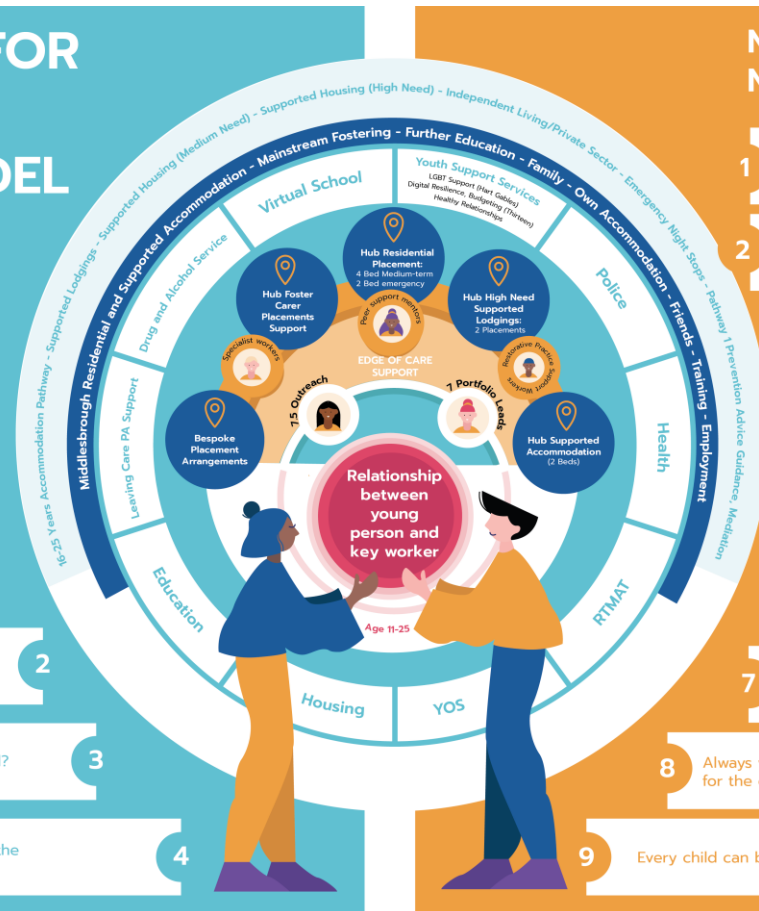
### Provocations

1 As a parent, would I be happy with this for my child?

2 Where do we see the young person in 6 months, 1 year, 2 years?

3 Would we say this, to this child?

4 Are we managing the risk for the child or for us?



### Non Negotiables

1 Working with partners, sharing the risk and supporting each other to take risks!

2 Having those difficult conversations!

3 Working together to meet the needs and outcomes of young people!

4 Having the right staff members with the attitude and skills in place to make that difference!

5 The voice of the child at the centre of their journey!

6 A whole family approach!

7 Team around the child training strategy!

8 Always working to permanence for the child!

9 Every child can be fostered!

- ▶ Adopting and adapting the Provocations and Non Negotiables of NWD where are we in our journey what matters to us!!!!
- ▶ What do they mean for Middlesbrough
- ▶ The use of Provocations & Non Negotiables shaping a new culture



# Work Completed in the last 12 Months



- ▶ We have received 163 referrals in 12 months
- ▶ Worked with 91 young people and families which is 56% of all referrals
- ▶ Currently we are working with 43 young people and their families
- ▶ 3 young people have returned home from residential placements to family
- ▶ 2 young people who have had high levels of support 3:1 in external residential are now supported within the hub on reduced staffing levels.

# Understanding the Child's Journey Power of the Deep Dive

**FUTURES**  
FOR FAMILIES

 MIDDLESBROUGH  
**CHILDREN**  
MATTER

 Middlesbrough  
moving forward

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- ▶ Adapting the Deep Dive process what does this mean for FFF!!
- ▶ Allowing the young person to come to life in the room
- ▶ Sharing what they might have said at the time
  
- ▶ What where the key events
- ▶ What did their life look like and what does this mean now
- ▶ What are our aspirations for them
- ▶ What have we learnt
  
- ▶ A change in a way of thinking for professional's involved.
- ▶ 24 Deep Dives completed in the first 12 months

# Increasing Safety for Young People in Middlesbrough



- ▶ FFF adapting and adopting RAISE - Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation.
- ▶ How have FFF used the RAISE process
- ▶ Individual young people who are on RMG
- ▶ Edge of care
- ▶ Group raises
  
- ▶ Other young people who are been exploited connected with OCG
- ▶ Supporting with Missing plans 15 completed for our most vulnerable young people who aren't under FFF.

# Delivering Briefings & Training



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- ▶ Understanding the invest our time to save time later!!
- ▶ Upskilling colleagues from across Children social care attending practice week
- ▶ Referrals - One chance!!!
- ▶ The power of communication
- ▶ Trauma informed practice
  
- ▶ Futures for Families what are we? how we can help?
- ▶ Deep Dive process for newly qualified Social workers
  
- ▶ Supervision training supporting in the development of training for managers.

# Cost Avoidance

## What Does it Mean for Middlesbrough



- ▶ During 2020/21 two young people moved into the Futures for Families hub where in the previous year they were in external Residential at a cost of £28,000 a week (£1,206,000 for the period of their stay at FFF actual savings) This is the equivalent of Gleneagles short break service for children with disabilities and Rosecroft children's home.

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### Cost avoidance

- ▶ August 2020 – March 21 £919,112.41 this is approx the same as 2x social work teams who support 270 young people.
- ▶ 2021 – 2022 £3,897,516.48
- ▶ 2022 – 2023 £6,487,347.84

# Any Questions?

**FUTURES**  
FOR FAMILIES



MIDDLESBROUGH  
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