

## CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**Date:** Wednesday 30th March, 2022  
**Time:** 1.00 pm  
**Venue:** Virtual

**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  
Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest  
To receive any declarations of interest.
3. Minutes- Corporate Parenting Board- 15 February 2022 5 - 12
4. Performance against Corporate Parenting Board Strategy  
The Head of Looked after children and Corporate Parenting will present the action plan to the Board.
5. Review of Permanence Action Plan 13 - 22  
The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting will provide a report to the Board.
6. Review of Sufficiency Action Plan 23 - 26  
Claire Walker, Specialist Commissioning Manger will present

the action plan to the Board.

7. Adoption Tees Valley- Bi -annual report 27 - 56  
Vicky Davison- Boyd, Service Manager for Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) will provide present the bi-annual report to the Board.
8. No Wrong Door (Future for Families) Pilot- Evaluation 57 - 126  
Abby Hennessey, Research Associate, What Works for Children's Social Care will provide the evaluation in respect to No wrong door (Future for Families).
9. Private Fostering 127 - 140  
Ben Short, Interim for Safeguarding and Care planning will provide the Private Fostering report to the Board.
10. Complaints made by Children looked after 141 - 144  
Siobhan Davies, Team Manager for RAD and Principle Social Worker will provide information to the Board on Complaints made by children looked after.
11. Participation of Children and Young people 145 - 154  
Kathy Peacock, Youth Voice and Influencer Contractor from Participation People will provide an update to the Board.
12. 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 22 March 2022

#### MEMBERSHIP

Councillors C Hobson (Chair), , A Hellaoui, T Higgins, Z Uddin, M Saunders, B Cooper, D Davison and J Walker

## **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 Tuesday 15 February 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Hobson (Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, Z Uddin, B Cooper and D Davison

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors M Smiles

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** H Wiseman, K Peacock (Participation People) and T Steel (HARROGATE AND DISTRICT NHS FOUNDATION TRUST))

**OFFICERS:** S Blood, R Brown, S Butcher, T Dunn, R Farnham, P Jemson, T Parkinson, R Scott, R Jordinson, J watson, X Davies, T James, L Jefferson and C Breheny

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors M Saunders, V Banks, P Rudd, C Snowball, D fenny, N Ayres, L Garvey, Dunning and J Walker

21/1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for Absence

21/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

21/3 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD- 18 JANUARY 2022**

The minutes from the Corporate Parenting Board held on 18 January 2022 were read and accepted as a true record.

21/4 **COVID- 19 UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Serbices provided a verbal update in relation to Covid 19.

The Director advised that in terms of schools, the levels of covid have started to decrease as are approaching half term and now schools are focusing on understanding the disruption caused to learning caused by the pandemic. Attendance oversight of the most vulnerable children is a key priority to the Council as well as safeguarding, as pointed out by the letter from Indra Morris, Director General for Children's Services, Communications & Strategy Group for the DFE.

The letter which was sent to all DSO's outlines the importance of supporting our most vulnerable children as we move out of the pandemic, so the safeguarding partnership was looking closely at this e.g partners are working with Virtual School Heads to support the attendance of Children Looked After and the extended group of children with a social worker which they support.

In terms of children's social care, it is business as usual.

The Director queried whether the Board would consider looking at the frequency of covid 19 update. The Board agreed that this would be updated at every other meeting, however if the situation changed, this could be reviewed.

**AGREED-**

1. That the update be noted
2. That the update on Covid-19 be presented at every other meeting.

## PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MIDDLESBROUGH

The Chair welcome, Kathy Peacock, Youth Voice and Influencer Contractor from Participation People to the meeting, who provided an overview of the work undertaken with children and young people since January 2022. The Board also were pleased to welcome Xavier Davies, Care Leaver / apprentice for Middlesbrough Council who was now working directly with Participation on Care to promote in care Councils.

The Board were provided with a quick recap of the role of participation and the key officers assigned to Middlesbrough. Kathy explained she joined Participation People in November 2021, 2 days a week to help Middlesbrough Council re-establish the in care councils. Other than the in care councils, there were other projects, however the Board would be updated on these in due course.

In terms of progress to date, the Board were advised that:

- Over the Christmas period, 135 care leavers were messaged telling them about the Care Leavers Forum. Seven young people joined and actively join on a Thursday evening.
- The In Care councils are being promoted and Kathy has meet with key managers to inform them about the groups. All teams sent invites for their young people to attend the Mini Children in Care Council (CiCC), Children in Care Council (CiCC ) and Care Leavers Forum. This is done on a strategic level to help improve and deliver services.
- Mid- January launch of the Care Experienced #YouthVoice groups.
- Mini CiCC - 3 sessions held for children aged 7 to 12 years. Unfortunately there have been no young people at these sessions. The groups were still held and promoted with foster carers/ social workers , however experience, it is harder to get this age range to come out therefore a day of fun activities was planned for 24 February 2022 , as part of a recruitment drive and gain a sense of whether young people wish to attend the group, or whether they want a different type of engagement.
- Children in Care Council - this group meets weekly. 4 sessions have been held and 2 young people participate. These are amazing young people who have helped design events and look at ways to engage further for children in care.
- Care Leaver's Forum - this group meets weekly. 4 sessions have been held and as stated 7 young people have engaged.
- Kathy has attended the Designated Teacher conference, emails to be sent informing them about the groups to share with their young people.
- The officer advised that they were flexible to engage with young people.
- Joined the closed Middlesbrough Fostering Facebook group – and posted regarding the sessions. Kathy received questions regarding these so she was able to promote and explain further about the groups.

The Board further heard from Xavier, who shared the posters which had been designed to promote the groups. The Board were keen for these to be promoted, and these would be circulated to the group after the meeting as well as the Virtual Schools. The posters had been circulated to managers, and to Paul Rudd to promote with independent fostering agencies.

From the care leavers forum, the young people have identifies issues which are important to them, these were as follows:

1. Trust in the people who support us
2. No False promises made
3. An understanding of what makes a positive/negative relationship
4. A trusting relationship with our Social Worker/PA
5. Access to ID - Passport, Birth Certificate, Provisional (and Full) Driving License and National Insurance Number
6. Information about how we can access to our care records / what is the process and who do we go too?
7. More preparation to live independently
8. More support for care leavers who become parents

In terms of future plans for 2022, Xavier advised the Board of the following:

- Celebration/activity sessions for care experienced young people to be held during school holidays - February, April and May
- All Team meetings to be attended to inform them about the groups and ensure they have young people attend.
- Older care experienced young people to join young people from Hounslow and Wandsworth on a residential in March 2022.
- Residential Homes to be visited to discuss these groups with staff and their young people
- Rescheduled Care Leavers Celebration event to be held on the 23rd February (delayed due to Covid 19)
- Survey to be sent to all care experienced young people asking them questions about their Health, Education setting, Voice and Support
- Create #YouthVoice on the road- capturing the voice of young people who do not wish to attend a group.

Finally, the Roadmap for 2022 was shared with the Board, and one element which was discussed was training for corporate parents, which would be co-arranged with Xavier and Care leavers.

Following the presentation, a Board member raised concern regarding the access to I.D. In response, the Board were assured that participation people were having discussions with the Principle social worker. The Director of Children's Services further outlined that this would be made a focus going forward.

The young person's views were shared this week and from this a 'YOU SAID, WE WILL DO' document has been created. The Head of Looked after children and Corporate Parenting advised that this has been shared and officers are working on responses. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

In terms of the in care councils, the question of accessibility was raised and this would be considered, as well as looking at when groups should be held e.g school holidays. Events had already been diarised for the Easter and May holidays as well as virtual events.

The Chief Executive addressed the Board and wanted to make sure that any promises / strategies would be agreed by Executive/ Council. This would be discussed.

A Board member also wanted to ensure that children and young people were properly supported after an issue was raised. In response, Kathy stated that they have a responsibility for those young people and if issues were identified, there would be a follow up conversation and the correct support would be sources.

The officers were thanked for their presentation.

**AGREED:**

1. That the information be noted
2. That the In care Council posters be circulated to all Board members.

21/6

**FOSTERING IN MIDDLESBROUGH- QUARTER 3 DATA**

The Head of Fostering was in attendance to provide the Board with the quarter 3 fostering data. The Board had received previous reports, which had shaped the way the information was to be presented to the Board. This quarterly report was based on the data requirements set out in the Ofsted Fostering Data Set, which was a statutory return compiled using data as of the 31 March each year.

In terms of what was working well within the fostering service and supporting lodgings, the Team Manager advised the Board that:

- Social workers and Supported Lodgings worker receive monthly reflective supervision
- Workers continue to scale themselves on average 7/8 out of 10 in respect to work

	Quarter 2	Quarter 3
Number of Enquiries Number of Initial Visits	14 3	10 1
Number of fostering families (mainstream and full approved connected Carers)	130	122
Number of children placed with Middleborough Carers	176	169
Foster placements available for children that are not occupied <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reduction has been for a number of reasons, for example the quality of our data is improving but in addition, the foster families terms of approval is being reviewed.</li> <li>• The service has reviewed every foster carer and their provision to ensure we are utilising every bed space.</li> <li>• The 15, may also include foster placements that offer respite care to support stability</li> <li>• Number of foster families which are approved only for babies (0-2 years)</li> <li>• We do reach out to neighbouring authorities if Middlesbrough struggle to place a child, however other authorities also struggle within their own area.</li> </ul>	50	15
<b>De – registrations (households)</b> Mainstream  Connected Foster to adopt Some of the children secured permanence through the legal order so not all de-registration was negative  In terms of de-registration, if the Council know there are difficulties, we ensure we increase supervision, look at support and training need. Once a foster carer decides to de-register, the Council will have in-depth discussions regarding the reasons, and generally they leave to personal health issues. However we do have some families (3	4(7 children provision) 1 (2 children)	5 (5 children)  (7 children) 2(2 children)



**NOMINET DIGITAL REACH PROGRAMME- UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Ralph Jordinson – Risk and resilience coordinator and Louisa Jefferson - Digital policy apprentice to the meeting. Nominet REACH – Digiwise.

In March 2021 we were successful in securing in a bid to research, consult and construct a policy document for children looked after and children leaving care regarding online access. This was funding through an online organisation called Nominet, who are the leading organisation and this national programme was in partnership with parentzone, and it covers 9 interlinked projects covering 3 challenges 1) building foster carers skills and confidence, 2) embedding digital skills and support, 3) elevating young people's voice to influence services that impact their digital safety and opportunity.

Purpose of the report was to develop a policy / best practice document for children looked after and children leaving care online access. It was noted that Care experienced young people have invaluable insight which is currently under-used in relation to digital and online safety policy development.

In terms of progress so far, the following have been undertaken:

- a) Employed an apprentice who has care experience.
- b) Project lead and the apprentice have been trained in Impact Measurement and Management and developed a 'Theory of Change' and young person blog. The Apprentice explained that the Theory of Change plan would identify the problems that we see for children in care and the risk for them whilst online ,and to see how we would address these issues and what the overall plan would be. The Theory of change was developed as was a child / young person's friendly version. Following this, after a meeting with parents (one of the key stakeholders) they suggested that a blog be created by the care leavers, explaining what is good and what improvements could be made.
- c) Consulted with young people and established the survey name: 'Digiwise'
- d) Formed a Steering Group to advise on key issues
- e) Developed an action plan which drives the project
- f) Hosted a care leavers football match and consultation event at Middlesbrough Football Community Foundation
- g) Designed and implemented a consultation survey for young people with care experience
- h) Designed a consultation survey for Foster Carers, Residential Workers and Social Workers.
- i) Is in the process of undertaking all consultation in g) and h) above

Early indications from the young peoples' survey (17 young people took part, however the steering group has increased) showed :

- 100% are accessing the internet
- 93% access 1 or more social media account as their main activity
- 60% of the young people surveyed are going online for more than 8 hours per week,
- 87% are using their smartphone as the main device to access the internet, but choosing their own data plans over the residential home internet connection, this is because they have unlimited access data plans (this potentially poses a risk if there are no filters or controls enabled)
- 60% of young people surveyed reported that they had seen the sale of drugs on their social media
- 33% had requests to send youth produced sexual imagery (Indecent images)
- 73% had seen fake news reports

The Board heard that one of the outcomes of the project was the introduction from the UK Council of Internet Safety. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) backed tool, UKCIS Digital Passport was a new innovative communication tool to help children and young people with care experience to explore their online lives and help keep them safe in online spaces (risks outside of the home).

It has three parts which should all be used together:

- Digital Passport: An introduction
- Digital Passport: For adults and carers

- Digital Passport: For children and young people  
Talking regularly about their digital lives with a trusted adult is a key way to help keep children and young people safe online. The Passport provides structure and resources to support professionals in having those conversations.

The Foster Carer survey has also been developed, and this project will continue with a survey for Foster Carers, Social Workers and Residential Workers.

The survey will identify key skills gaps in their knowledge and their experiences of young people accessing online spaces in their care.

This professionals survey was with the consultation portal and expected to be live by end of February 2022, the findings will also inform the final policy.

Members were advised that the next update for the Board on Nominet would be in June/July 2022.

The Coordinator and Apprentice were thanked for their presentation.

AGREED- That the project update be noted.

21/8

## **PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY**

The Head of Looked after Children and Corporate Parenting was in attendance and provided the Board with information relating to the Corporate Parenting Board scorecard.

The Head of Service advised that the scorecard was in place for the Corporate Parenting Board to see how our performance was progressing and have the opportunity to challenge.

The main points to note were as follows:

**DEMAND-** In February 2021 there were 586 children looked after in the authority. This has reduced to 500 at the end of January 2022. This has been a constant decrease. As of today (15 February 2022) Middlesbrough had 495 children looked after.

- There has been a rapid reduction over the year demonstrating a decrease of 14.6% over the last 12 months and an overall 28.7% reduction since the height of 702 children in September 2020. For every 0.6 children entering care, one child exits care. This ratio has been maintained for 7 months.
- In February 2021 the gap between Middlesbrough's rate of looked after children per 10,000 of the children population and that of the region was 70.69. This has consistently reduced over the last 12 months and is currently 42.93.
- As of today Middlesbrough's rate per 10,000 is 149. Our statistical neighbor rate is that of 134.

## **DEMAND- CASELOADS**

- Caseloads have consistently reduced since August 2021 and throughout the improvement journey.
- Whilst the average per service area varies slightly, the average caseloads across Children's social care is currently 16.7. This will support the service to drive improvements in the quality of practice.

## **Permanency**

- 22 children ceased to be looked after in January 2022 (CHAT 07.02.22).
- Of the children that ceased to become looked after they had spent an average of 104 weeks in care.
- This is a reduction from December 2021 where it took those children who had secured permanence longer.
- Of the 22 children that ceased to be looked after:
  - 4 were adopted

- 6 SGO/Residence Orders
  - 8 turned 18 years of age
  - 3 returned to family
  - 1 other
- Children Placed with Parents - The number of children placed with a parent and subject to a Care Order has reduced significantly since February 2021. There are currently 39 children placed with a parent. This was a 60% overall reduction since the height on 99 children in September 2020. This is supported with a plan which is reviewed.
  - Connected Carers – There were currently 105 children in connected carers placements. The overall numbers have reduced from 108 in December 2021. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020 (50.4%).
  - Adoption - The average number of days from entering care to being placed in an adoptive placement was 380. This has reduced from a height of 558 days in 2019/20 to 382 days in October 2021. (Adoption Score Care data for Q2)

#### **PLACEMENT STABILITY**

- Less than 5% of the looked after population have experienced a placement breakdown in the last 12 months.
- In January 2021, 9.8% of looked after children had experienced a placement break down in the last 12 months.
- At the end of January 2022 – 37 children looked after by Middlesbrough had experience 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months. (7.4% of the children looked after population). This has been reduced from 127 in January 2021.

#### **Quality and Impact**

##### **Visits**

94% of children were visited within January 2022 (2% decrease from last month) and 94% of children were seen by their social worker in January 2022 (2% decrease from last month). 83% of looked after children have been seen alone.

##### **Supervision/Management Oversight**

94% of looked after children have had a supervision within the month of January 2022. This is a 2% decrease from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% for the last 12 months.

##### **Personal Education Plans**

Performance in relation to PEPs remains high at 98.9%. This is a 0.7% increase from last month when 98.2% of children had a recorded PEP within the last 6 months. This performance has remained consistently high for the last 12 months.

##### **Health Assessments**

92.4% of health checks have been conducted and recorded within the last 12 months. This is an increase from 93.1% in December 2021. Performance has been consistently high at over 90% for the last 12 months.

Dental checks – 66.8% of children overall have had a dental check in the last 12 months. This has been a 1.5% decrease since last month.

The Head of Service finally shared 'what our children tell us', from feedback, the children were asked to scale their lives between 1 and 4:

- 50% of children reported that things had improved for them by 4
- 25% of children reported that things had improved for them by 2
- 12.5% of children reported that things had improved for them by 1
- 12.5% of children reported that things had stayed the same

Children views have been as follows:

***'They take into account my thoughts and feelings'.***

***'You do what you say you are going to do. Get things done quickly, I'm not waiting about for things to happen'.***

***'There's not been no false promises. So I feel good'.***

A Board Member made a query in relation to the caseload numbers and the reasons for this. In response, the Head of Service advised that the demand was still there but the quality of practice had improved, which meant children are moving through the system quicker and children are securing permanence in a more timely way. On top of this, the Council was working hard to recruit permanent staff and reduce agency staff.

In terms of Corporate Parents, a Board member asked whether all members were invited to attend the meetings. The Democratic Services officer advised all meetings were live streamed and councilors were informed of meetings. The Chair also outlined that she was ensuring that more information sessions were organised for all councilors to inform them of their Corporate Parenting role and inform them of key areas.

The Chair was very thankful for this positive report and thanked all the officers involved in getting this stage.

AGREED- That the information be noted.

21/9 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

21/10 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**ORDERED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

21/11 **CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE**

The Risk and Reduction Manager provided the Board with a presentation in relation to children missing from Care.

AGREED- That the information be noted.

# Permanence Action Plan Highlight Report March 2022



Corporate Parenting Board receive updates on a bi-monthly basis with the last update before Board in January 2022.

### 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**

- Permanency Pathway is in place and is regularly communicated to staff.
- Legal Gateway Panel is embedded and work has been underway to strengthen the recording of management oversight and rationale to fully evidence decision making.
- A Legal Gateway Tracker is in place to progress and track care proceedings. Regular analysis is undertaken to understand the trends.
- Strengthening Practice are delivering a comprehensive Permanence training programme to the workforce. Some final sessions are yet to take place. Practice Leads will then support ongoing learning with staff.
- Hot topic sessions continue to be scheduled to regularly update the staff on any developments with permanence work.
- Berri has been commissioned to support children's emotional health issues. It is an online assessment tool that will be used to inform assessments and care plans and will consider mental health, behaviour, emotional well-being, relationships, risk and attachment. Since February we have completed 81 Berri tools and are using the outcomes to support next steps for children.
- Revised practice standards for Care Leavers have been launched within the Pathways Service.
- A Workforce Recruitment Strategy is in place and recruitment of staff is ongoing with a new offer to experienced staff.



- We have recruited 3 permanent social workers to the CLA service who commence posts in April 2022.
- There has been a full review of the CLA service by Audit to Excellence in January and February. This has evidenced significantly reduced levels of inadequacy and improved levels of good audits.
- 87.5% of children consulted in the audit process said their lives had got better as a result of having a social worker. 12.5% of children said their lives had stayed the same.
- We are very excited about Practice Week 2022 (March 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>). This will have a focus on language, communication and identity which will support our social workers practice around children who are care experienced.

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

- Permanence Monitoring Group continues to be well supported by Adoption Tees Valley and the IRO Service.
- Strengthened reviewing processes and senior management oversight of the education of all looked after children continues to ensure that there is a reduction in fixed term exclusions, children accessing less than 25 hours of education and in unregistered educational provisions. This includes the SEN team, the Virtual School, Inclusion team, Early Years and Primary Inclusion team.
- North Yorkshire, as Partners in Practice have concluded the audit work in the fostering service and concluded that decision making in respect of Reg 24 Connected Carers is strong.
- A full review of all of the support offered to support children's emotional health has been undertaken. It is clear that there is a wide range of services available through the child's looked after plan, SEN and the Virtual School. Further work is required to develop the CAMHS offer to children in our care.
- SEN Team are developing a performance scorecard to report to the Director of Children's Care Quality and Performance Workshop on a monthly basis.

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

- Permanency Monitoring Group continues to be 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 and continues to support children to reach their forever home in a timely way.
- The commissioned social work team remains in place to support children to achieve permanence in a timely manner. The team also supports practice development across the service.

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

- We are in the process of commissioning ARC Box, an online platform for life story work which will enhance the quality of this work and allow access to all those who are important to the child to contribute. Corporate Parenting Board may wish to see a demo of this app at a future board.
- 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.
- Recruitment for the Children in Care Council is ongoing.
- A care experienced young person now attends Corporate Parenting Board
- Care experienced young people delivered a workshop to Corporate Parenting Board regarding their journeys and experiences which was well received by Members.
- A Care Leavers event was held in February which was very well attended by young people celebrated the achievements of the young people. This was attended by Cllr Hobson as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board. The organisation of the event was supported by two care experienced young people.
- A children in care residential event took place in early March which was a great success. This involved children from a number of different Local Authorities.
- Evidence from January and February audit activity in the service demonstrated that direct work, life story work and/ or plans to progress this is increasingly evident on children's records. Further work is required to ensure that what children are telling us is linked to assessments to inform decision making. Audit tells us that social workers and personal advisors know their children well.

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

- Performance report is delivered to each Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that there is rigorous oversight and challenge.
- Permanence Tracker remains in place and is used to drive effective permanence planning.
- Legal Tracker remains in place and is effectively used to track progression of all court cases.
- LCS transformation programme is developing 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 to ensure that that performance reporting is improved further

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

- Virtual School and Social Care delivered joint Hot Topic sessions to staff in October 2021 regarding joint working and the effective use of Personal Education Plans.
- Annual training plan for Designated Teachers
- Strengthened joint working with the Virtual School has led to weekly reviews of children absent from school alongside health and social care.
- National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) Virtual School peer review September 2021. An action plan is in place to take forward learning and improvements.
- University mentor Scheme commenced this term and provides support from university students for year 10 and year 11 children in our care. To improve educational outcomes and raise aspirations for our young people
- DFE post 16 pilot commenced and is in place from September 2021 to March 2022. We successfully made a bid for additional funding to support post 16 outcomes.
- NEET PEPs. NEET PEPs were introduced in September 2021 to provide more focussed support for those who are not in education, employment or training or at risk of falling in to this category
- NEET task and finish group continues
- NEET Clinic remains in place, is held monthly and is supported by YOS, Virtual School, SEND, Work Readiness, Thirteen Housing and some local providers
- Virtual School Annual conference took place on 11 February 2022
- Designated Teachers handbook was published on 11 February 2022
- Carer and adoptive parent handbook has been published and is in place to support carers and adopters to meet the educational needs of the children they care for
- A process is now in place to fast track EHCP assessment for children in care
- The Virtual School has strong links with schools through Designated Teacher Networks

## 4.0 Impact/Performance/Data

- ✓ Overall in the last 12 months, the looked after population has reduced from 586 children in February 2021 to 503 in February 2022 (14% reduction). There has been a 28.3% reduction in the overall numbers of looked after children since the height of 702 in September 2020.
- ✓ The rate per 10,000 has reduced from 176.9 in February 2021 to 151.8 in February 2022. The gap is closing on our statistical neighbour position (134.4)
- ✓ Since 01 April 2021 24 Adoption Orders have been secured. This includes:
  - 4 children of BAME
  - 4 sibling groups of 2
  - 2 aged 4+
  - 1 child with significant health needs
- ✓ There are currently a further 36 children progressing to adoption with Placement Orders. Of which only 1 child does not have a confirmed link.
- ✓ There has been a total of 64 children secure permanence through the granting of a Special Guardianship Orders in the last 12 months.
- ✓ Connected Carers – There are currently 109 children in connected carers placements. This has reduced from a height of 212 in 2020.
- ✓ Placement with Parents – There are currently 41 children placed with parents. This has reduced from 52 children in October 2021 and from a height of 99 children in September 2020 to 58 in August 2021. (58.5% reduction)
- ✓ There have been no looked after children permanently excluded from school in the last 5 years.
- ✓ There has been a 128% reduction in school suspension from 2019/20 to 2021/22
- ✓ Only 1.7% of looked after children are receiving less than 25 hours education (9 children). Of which there is an action plan and oversight from Virtual School with regards to each child.

## 5.0 Risks

- The increase in demand across the service and across the tees valley region
- Risks associated with the recruitment of staff in the looked after and care leaving service.

## 6.0 Next Steps

- Life Story Work compliance and quality to continue be driven
- Progress the commissioning of Arcbox to support the quality of Life Story Work
- The ongoing 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
- Practice leads deployed in to the service to improve the quality of care plans for looked after children
- Participation People to develop attendance and provide Corporate Parenting Board with a proposed plan for the Children in Care Council.
- Recruitment of permanent staff
- Practice Week in March 2022 to support staff development

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

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

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# Sufficiency Action Plan

## Highlight Report

### March 2022



## 1.0 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 Sufficiency Action Plan was developed in consultation and is built around the priorities set out in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. The action plan sets out actions we feel need to be undertaken in order to better meet our needs.

Our Sufficiency Action Plan will be reviewed and updated as actions are completed or as new work is identified in the event of any changes to our sufficiency needs over the 3-year cycle of our plan.

The overall responsible Council officer for the Sufficiency Action Plan for Children and Young People is the Director of Children's Services (DCS). For each of the six priority themes, senior Council officers have 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 Commissioning For Children & Young People	Head of Service Futures for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
2	Increasing Placements Close to where Children & Young People Live and Learn	Head of Service Future for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
3	Growing Early Intervention & Prevention	Head of Prevention Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
4	Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers	Head of Service Children Looked After Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
5	Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People	Virtual Head Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
6	Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes	Head of Service Future for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager



## 2.0 Progress against Each Theme

The Commissioning Action Plan has been reviewed and updated in November 2021.

### **Theme 1 - Strengthening Commissioning for Children and Young People**

- A Market Engagement Plan is now due to be presented at Children's DMT in April 2022.

### **Theme 2 – Increasing Placements Close to where Children and Young People live and learn**

- The regional framework for fostering tender has been published and will close on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022. Following this the regional evaluation panel will evaluate all tenders and award for the new framework to be live on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.
- Work continues with the region to understand and identify any opportunities for collaboration and the impending set up of a regional commissioning hub.

### **Theme 3 – Growing Early Intervention & Prevention**

- PAUSE has been extended and it now includes a Start Well Worker who will work specifically with women who are pregnant and will be part of our pre-birth forum.

### **Theme 4 – Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers**

- Contract monitoring visits of all unregulated placements has been carried out and will be reviewed again in 6 months' time.
- NYAS have been commissioned to undertake visits for these placements in order to strengthen the voice of the child and also provide further assurance around quality until the provision becomes regulated.
- A regional meeting with OfSTED was held to discuss the upcoming changes for unregulated provision to become regulated and what support the market will need.

### **Theme 5 – Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People**

- Virtual School attend all PEPs to support early identification of SEND and to prevent suspension
- Joint working with the inclusion team to help schools to support CLA SEND effectively

### **Theme 6 – Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes**

- An internal recruitment campaign has been undertaken to secure new carers.

### 3.0 Impact/Performance/Data

- Weekly reporting on all residential placements activity continues and is providing greater level of data on placement changes and needs.

### 5.0 Risks

- Staffing levels in all provisions continues to be challenging but this is being monitored and in the event that issues are identified we will work closely with providers and the service area to provide as much support and resilience as possible.

### 6.0 Next Steps

- Undertake a refresh of the Action Plan at the April 2022 meeting in order to ensure we have all actions included
- Ensure change controls are secured where any changes to deadlines are identified.

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

**Author – Claire Walker, Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager**

# Adoption Tees Valley

## Bi-Annual Report 2021-2022

### 1.4.21-30.9.21



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## Glossary

ADM- agency decision maker

PO- Placement order

RAA- Regional Adoption Agency

VAA- Voluntary Adoption Agency

# Adoption Tees Valley

## Bi-Annual Report 2021-22

Period- 1.4.21-30.9.21

### 1. Introduction

This report will provide information on the work of Adoption Tees Valley for the period of 1.4.21-30.9.21. Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) is the Regional Adoption Agency for the 5 Local Authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton.

The report will focus on the key matters for the first period of 2021-22. The full year progress in all areas of the Adoption Agency was last reported in the Annual Report for 2020-21, and will be reported on again, in the full year Annual Report for this current year- 2021-22.

### 2. National Context of Adoption

The National Adoption Strategy, Achieving Excellence Everywhere, was published in July 2021. This set out the government agenda for continued priority areas for adoption development and highlighted the support that will be provided to the RAA Leaders Group to drive progress.

Key priorities for the government set out in the strategy are:

- Recovery from covid, and learning from practice during the pandemic
- Recruiting adopters for priority children- those who wait the longest
- Finding families for children, not children for families
- A seamless approval process for all adoptive families
- Including the voice of adopted children in shaping services
- Matching children with adopters
- More use of early permanence
- Post adoption support- ensuring families have access to early mainstream help and support and more specialist support at the time they need it, across social care, education and health.

ATV has been engaged and involved in the national agenda- through contribution at leadership level to the RAA priority workstreams, and through development planning, which is reflective of the national and regional priorities, as set out.

This Bi-Annual report will also show the outcome of the Review of ATV, undertaken on behalf of, and involving the Board of ATV, and which resulted in setting strategic priorities for Adoption Tees Valley, in the context of the National Adoption Strategy.

### **3. Flexibilities**

ATV has not used any of the former flexibilities permitted under the Adoption and Coronavirus (Amendment) Regulations (2020), however has used the flexibilities permitted until 30.9.21 on 6 occasions.

These relate to the agency determining that adopters may enter stage 2 of the assessment, without the Adult Health report having been received within the timeframe of stage 1. Adopters were made aware that they would not have the right to access the IRM if the agency went on to end the assessment, based on information arising from the adult health checks and Medical Advisor advice to the agency.

All adoptive parents who were required to do so by regulation had adoption medicals, which were considered by the Agency Medical Advisor, prior to consideration by the Adoption Panel, and approval.

### **4. Adoption Activity and Performance Information**

ATV manages and monitors adoption activity and performance, to review how the service is doing for children and families on key performance indicators, against previous regional performance, and against the national adoption picture.

The scorecard which has been recently updated, provides detailed information in relation to each of the 5 LA's performance in adoption activity, in addition to the overall ATV performance, combining all 5 LA's.

In looking at performance, it's important to have some understanding of factors that underpin overall adoption performance, and the timescale in relation to each individual child. What is crucial for children is that the adoptive family who will go on to adopt them, is well prepared and supported to take the child. It's also very important that all other potential birth family and kinship options have been thoroughly explored. Where permanence can be provided within the family, or kinship network, this is almost always the selected option for the child. When children are older, or require adoption alongside their brothers or sisters, or when they have additional needs, its essential to prepare children well for moving into their new family.

#### What influences performance?

Timescales for children in being adopted are influenced by:

- Care planning and timely decision making in the LA
- Preparation of children for adoption

- Availability of adopters who are suitable to take the child, and can meet their care plan

Fig.1

ATV Performance data, 1.4.21-30.9.21, compared with the same period in 2020-21, and full year 2020-21.

### Children

	ATV 1.4.20- 30.9.20	ATV 2020- 21	ATV 1.4- 30.9.2021	Direction c/w ATV end of Q2 2020
<b>Adoption Orders</b>	39	89	46	↑ Inc 18%
<b>Placements</b>	37	82	56	↑ Inc 51%
<b>PO's</b>	21	76	41	↑ Inc 100%
<b>ADM BID's</b>	39	99	39	Same level
<b>Early Permanence</b>	X	17	5	Measure not the same at Q2 2020
<b>A10</b> (Entering care to moving in with adopters) - days	X	410	420	A10 not measured in 2020
<b>A2</b> (PO to match)	239	238	204	↓ Dec 14%
<b>Rate of leaving care by AO</b>	15%	12%	11%	↓ Dec 4 %

From ATV Q2 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns.

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

### Adopters

	ATV 1.4.20- 30.9.20	ATV 2020-21	ATV 1.4- 30.9.2021	Direction c/w ATV end of Q2 2020
<b>Approvals</b>	26	62	24	↓ Dec 7%
<b>Numbers in assessment- end of period</b>	41	40	34	↓ Dec 17%
<b>Stage 1 starts</b>	27	63	23	↓ Dec

	ATV 1.4.20- 30.9.20	ATV 2020-21	ATV 1.4- 30.9.2021	Direction c/w ATV end of Q2 2020
				15%
<b>Stage 2 starts</b>	24	62	21	↓ Dec 12%
<b>Fastrack</b>	x	12	4	X
<b>Waiting to be matched at end of period</b>	15	36	21	↑ Inc 64%
<b>Waited more than 3 months to be matched</b>	36%	54%	66%	↑ Inc
<b>Approval to match timescale (Previous 12 months) Days</b>	X	129	165	↑ Inc  (Below England target and England average)
<b>Approval timescale days</b>		217	226	↑ Inc
<b>Stage 1 (Previous 12 months) days</b>	X	93	97	↑ Inc
<b>Stage 2 (Previous 12 months) Days</b>	X	127	134	↑ Inc

From ATV Q4 Scorecard, taken from ASGLB returns, England Data from ASGLB Q4 2020-21

X indicates data not available, or not meaningful in this report

#### 4.1 Analysis of Performance Information

The numbers of children adopted, and the numbers of children placed for adoption has risen significantly compared with the same period last year, and when taken in comparison with previous years of adoption activity since ATV started. A notable feature of Adoption orders granted, by Local Authority, is the rise in the rate of AO in Middlesbrough, and a reduction in Redcar and Cleveland. Detailed Local Authority data is provided on P



ATV data is against a national picture of declining numbers of adoption orders granted, across England.

The question is why this regional picture is showing more adoptions and more placements for adoption, while nationally there is a different picture.

In this region, ATV have worked closely with the 5 LAs to continue adoption activity through the pandemic, in a safe, but active way. The Teesside Courts have worked in a planned and organised way, and with ATV, to manage adoption hearings, ensuring that adoption orders are granted, and children are formally adopted into their new families. This picture is not universal across England, and local timeliness of progressing adoption hearings may account for the high number of orders granted in this year to date.

(Published information in the period beyond this report is indicating that adoption order numbers are rising across England in Quarter 3).

The Local Authorities of Tees Valley have continued to experience higher numbers of looked after children, and this will have an impact on adoption numbers overall. ATV and partner local authorities have continued to work closely together to ensure that family finding is timely, and adoptive families are found for children who have an adoption plan. Deeper investigation into adoption activity shows that almost all of the adopters approved for ATV go on to adopt Tees Valley children, and that where ATV does not have a suitable family internally, our developed local sufficiency relationships with regional Voluntary Adoption Agencies are being well used to place children within the North East region, and more quickly. From information analysed for the purposes of the ATV Review (see later section) it's clear that ATV are placing more older children and more siblings together, and so are being effective in enabling a greater number of children to be placed for adoption, who may otherwise have remained in long term foster care.

Placement Orders granted have also risen significantly, compared with the same period last year, although in 2020 the Courts were experiencing the early months of the pandemic, and POs were delayed at that time. However, adoption activity is continuing to be high, and this is evident in 4 of the 5 LA's, in this first period of the year. (See later section for more detailed breakdown by Local Authority). Agency Decisions that adoption is the Local Authority plan (ADM) have remained the same, indicating that at the end of Q2 adoption activity was plateauing. However, activity since the end of Q2 has identified that there are again a high number of children being progressed with a permanence plan of adoption in Tees Valley. Activity across the year will be reported on in the full annual report.

Early permanence (EP) placements have reduced in this period, compared with overall numbers in the previous year. In 2020-21 the agency provided a high focus on EP. There has now been experience of a small number of

children who have returned to birth family following placement with prospective adopters, approved as temporary foster carers, and the agency is experiencing a reduction in carers who wish to undertake EP at this point. Further national and regional strategic work is underway, to develop and enhance early permanence as an option for children- see later section.

The overall timeliness for children from entering care to moving in with adopters has risen slightly in this period, although we know this data is skewed by a very small number of children who have had a lengthy wait but are now adopted. Timescales for PO to match have reduced in this period, which is encouraging, and has been an area of operational focus. National data published by ASGLB shows ATV to be reducing the time between PO and match, with an average of 149 days for children who have been matched in the last 12 months, compared with 193 days as an all England average.

ATV has seen a reduction in the numbers of adopters approved overall in this period compared with previous year. There have been 24 approvals in the period, compared with 26 last year. Numbers in the assessment process have also dropped with 34 not yet approved at the end of September 2021, compared with 41 at the same time in the previous year.

There have been a number of assessments which have not progressed to approval, and analysis shows that during the pandemic, while a higher number of people approached to be considered to be adopters, the withdrawal rate was higher, with some applicants being not ready or suitable to adopt. This factor has been seen more widely across RAA's nationally, and also locally across Fostering Services.

Timescales for assessment have increased on average. Timescales for Adopter Medicals have impacted on the timeliness of approvals.

The service is addressing challenges, through strategic links with health, and the Safeguarding GP's. However, delays do remain, and some GP surgeries continue to prove difficult to resolve these issues with.

#### Key successes:

- High numbers of children adopted
- High numbers of children placed for permanence via adoption
- Timeliness of placing children for adoption is improving overall
- Numbers of children waiting at any point in time who do not have a link is low. Children move on, and families are found

#### Challenges:

- Sufficiency of internal adopters continues to be a challenge, during this period.

- Early permanence placement sufficiency is, and will continue to be a challenge for the next 12 month period
- The children most likely to wait longest are those who are in a sibling group, and where one child is over the age of 5.

## **5. Review of Adoption Tees Valley**

Adoption Tees Valley achieved the 3 year point within this period, having commenced as the RAA in May 2018.

In line with the original business case, a review of ATV has been undertaken, led by a senior manager, independent of ATV, and who was located within Stockton BC (SBC) Transformation Team. The period of activity reviewed was 1.4.2018- 31.3.2021

The ATV review has been supported by the ATV Service Manager, and by data analysis provided through SBC.

Surveys were undertaken with adoptive parents, staff in the team, and Adoption lead officers in each of the 5 Local Authorities.

A Focus group was held with ATV Board, independently facilitated by a consultant with experience of regionalisation of adoption.

The terms of reference for the review were agreed by the ATV Board and centred around the original objectives set out in the full business case presented to the 5 Councils for agreement.

Objectives reviewed:

- Objective 1 is to “deliver better outcomes for children”
- Objective 2 is “deliver improved value for money”
- Objective 3 is “establish a strong and sustainable service”
- Objective 4 is “ease of implementation for the new partnership”

### **5.1 Key Findings**

- More children have been adopted from care over the period since regionalisation, than in the 3 years prior to regionalisation. Up 20% since the RAA has been in place.
- More children in harder to place categories have been adopted from care, including a significant rise in siblings placed together, and children aged 5+. A broader range of children have been adopted.
- Overall timescales have not decreased, in placing children for adoption, as measured by the time from entering care to being placed for adoption (A1). Significant variation occurs across different Local Authorities, and improvements have been seen in Stockton,

Hartlepool, and Darlington over the 3 year period, while there has been an increase in timescales for Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough. The report considered the details of all adoptions, and noted many children are achieving adoption well within nationally expected timescales and being placed in a timely way following the Placement Order.

- The new scorecard indicator, which adjusts for children who have gone on to be adopted by their foster carer (A10) shows an overall decrease in timescales over the period, although an increase in timescale for Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough. The ATV timescale for this indicator is below national average.
- Placement Order to matching timescales have increased as a whole with only Middlesbrough showing improvement as time has progressed.
- ATV has increased the number of adopters approved and available for Tees Valley children.
- The matching timescale for adopters following approval is well below national average, showing ATV adopters are being used quickly, for the children requiring placement. This means ATV is recruiting the right adopters for the children it needs to place.
- A sufficiency strategy with regional VAA's supports placement activity for children, especially harder to place children.
- More adoptions have been achieved on the same staffing resources as set out in the original plan.
- The interagency expenditure has increased year on year, with children being placed with VAA adopters.
- Comparatively, ATV provides good value for money when compared with other RAA's. The unit cost of adoption is around £4000 less per adoption than the average RAA costs, on those agencies where information is published.
- ATV spends proportionately more on interagency placements per unit cost of adoption, than average RAA costs.
- The RAA has staffed an adoption support service and is drawing significantly more from the Adoption Support Fund than was previously the case. The proportion of draw down from ASF by ATV has increased, compared with the national picture, indicating that ATV is operating a best value approach in respect of access to external funding.
- Adoptive parents are overall satisfied and talk positively about the service they receive from ATV. Areas for improvement are life story work, letterbox support, and waiting times for adoption support assessments. The welcome, preparation and assessment were very positively commented upon.
- Staff are positive about the service, and the culture. They have the opportunity to develop positive practice. However, work pressures were noted.

## 5.2 Recommendations from the review:

- **Continue to review practice which underpins the PO to match timescale.**  
 This is underway.  
 Adoption Champions have been identified within each LA to promote adoption, and care planning.  
 The service is working with partner LA's to strengthen working together, train staff, and strengthen practice around early planning for permanence.  
 Strategic work on information Sharing protocols have been completed, and ATV is now working closely with all LA's and VAA's on early permanence and finding the right match, pre PO, which will be progressed once Court Authority to place for adoption is achieved.  
 Early permanence continues to be an area for development, and national funding has been secured for an EP co-ordinator in this region.
- **Children's diversity should be an area for continued development, and more welcome to minority ethnic adopters.**  
 A senior social worker in ATV has been allocated to lead on this area of development, to seek to secure more adopters in minority ethnic groups.
- **Work with adopted children should be developed further so their views and experiences can shape future service planning**  
 Children and young people have been working on a film to share their views about education. A young people's worker is a new investment in ATV, to provide dedicated time to develop participation, and inclusion for children and young people.
- **Areas for strengthening support have been identified in the review**  
 More resource for letterbox arrangements have been put in place, and a senior social worker has been allocated to lead and oversee this area. Life story work has been re-designated back to the responsibility of the children's social workers and is now being undertaken in LA's. Young, adopted people influenced this practice with their voice on life story work.
- **Review percentage contributions from LA's**  
 Net contributions from each partner local Authority have been reviewed taking account of adoption activity in the 3 year period. Adjusted contributions have now been put in place and agreed with Directors of Finance.
- **Review factors impacting on Interagency costs**

A business case for investment has been presented to the ATV board, and Directors of Finance, for further investment, targeted at reducing interagency costs, and securing more internal adopters.

- **The Board considered recommendations on governance.**

A strategic plan, with strategic priorities has been set by the Board, taking into account the National Adoption Strategy. Greater focus on the objectives, aligned to the Strategic Priorities have been undertaken, and a set of measures agreed, which will be measured and reported on in the new and updated balanced scorecard.

The Board considered ongoing discussion on “strong and Sustainable” services, and what this means, for key stakeholders, including Elected members.

An options appraisal is to be developed to consider how ATV creates closer working relationships with key stakeholders.

A review of the interrelationship between Board and Adoption Lead Officers has been started.

A review of what further financial information is required, to provide good governance and oversight of the RAA, has been considered.

Following Review and further discussions at Board, arising from the Board Focus group, strategic priorities were set as set out in figure 2.

Figure2.

**Strategic Priorities of the Board 2021-23**

Overarching principles governing the strategic direction of Adoption Tees Valley

- To be ambitious that more children can achieve secure attachment to adoptive parents, and a good understanding of their early lives, to provide the best foundation for mental wellbeing, and lifelong connections with family.
- To have an excellent integrated adoption service between Local Authorities and ATV, ensuring a shared understanding of adoption practice, and timely planning for permanence for children
- To listen to the experiences and views of adoptive parents, and children/young people, to have a service informed and improved by the lived experience of those we work with.
- To provide a service that is creates value for money by targeting best use of financial resources, to create maximum impact for children and families.

**Priority 1**

**Timely Permanence for Children with an Adoption Plan**

- To reduce the time that children wait before moving in with their adoptive family
- To have sufficiency of adoptive families suitable for the children who require adoption in Tees Valley

- To aim for an identified family prior to PO, and to reduce Matching timescales, through timely care planning, integrated working and timely decision making.

**Priority 2**

**Early Permanence for More Children**

- More use of Fostering for Adoption and Concurrent Planning, through early care planning and assessment, and involving birth family
- More training and support for prospective adoptive parents who offer EP
- Through the above, enabling earlier secure attachment to permanent families, and reducing moves in care

**Priority 3**

**Adoption Support Throughout the Child and Family's life journey**

- Good preparation of children for adoption
- Commencement of life story work from the start of care planning for permanence
- The right supports identified before matching, enabling the right adoption support plan for every child and family
- Smart commissioning, and collaborating for the right adoption support services for children and families, before and beyond adoption order
- Timely adoption support assessment and access to the right adoption supports across multi-agency partners

**6. Recruitment, Assessment, Preparation and Approval of Adopters**

The agency has continued to actively promote the need for adoptive parents, through social media and dedicated marketing campaigns.

ATV worked with the national adopter campaign in National Adoption Week, which fell just outside of this time period.

A summer campaign for more adopters was implemented, focussing on children waiting.

The performance information in section XXX above highlights a downturn in numbers of adopters in assessment during this period, and evaluation is that this is a similar trend seen across other RAA's, with the pandemic being seen to be coming to an end.

In this period 3 Preparation Groups were held, which involved 21 families.

These included:

17 heterosexual couples

2 single applicants

2 same sex couples

1 couple of ethnic minority heritage, and 1 single ethnic minority applicant.

Additionally, there have been 4 Family and Friends preparation sessions, with 22 members of prospective adopters' network attending these.

There were 24 adoptive families approved in this period.

- 4 families were approved to take siblings, with the remaining families being approved for 1 child
- 16 heterosexual couples
- 4 same sex couples
- 4 single applicants
- 2 families were approved with consideration for early permanence
- 3 were foster carers for the child, going on to adopt
- 3 were second time adopters
- 1 was a connected carer of the child's family, going on to adopt
- In this period all applicants approved were of white British ethnicity.

## 7. Adoption Panel

The Panel Chair has provided a report which has been presented to the ATV Board as required under NMS 25.

<b>Number of panel meetings held</b>	28				
<b>Chair</b>	Jenny Parkin	Sue Holton	Liz Talbot	Jenny Fagan	
	11	8	6	3	
<b>Cases per panel</b>					
<b>1 case</b>	2	<b>2 cases</b>	10	<b>3 cases</b>	14
<b>4 cases – 1</b>					
<b>Matches</b>					
<b>Total number of Matching Cases</b>	48				
<b>Total number of Children matched</b>	55				
<b>Total cases where match recommended</b>	48				
<b>Number of cases where match not recommended</b>	0				
<b>Number Internal Matches (cases)</b>	38	<b>Number External Matches (cases)</b>		10	
<b>Internal Matches (Children)</b>	43	<b>External matches (Children)</b>		12	



<b>Total Children where Early Permanence placement prior to match</b>	9		
<b>Relinquished Children</b>	0		
<b>Matching Timescales (Children) -Placement Order to Matching Panel</b>			
<b>Up to 4 Months</b>	<b>4-6 Months</b>	<b>6-12 Months</b>	<b>12 Months +</b>
38	6	10	1
<b>Approvals</b>			
<b>Total Number Households Approved</b>	22		
<b>First Time Approvals</b>			
<b>Fast Track – second + time adopters</b>	5		
<b>Fast track – Foster Carers</b>	2		
<b>Approvals where early permanence Recommended</b>	2		
<b>Cases where approval not recommended</b>	0		
<b>Reviews of Approval Presented</b>	0		
<b>Recommendations for Withdrawal of Approvals (no longer suitable) presented</b>	1		
<b>Disruptions Presented</b>			
<b>Numbers of Disruptions of child's placement presented, pre- Adoption Order</b>	0		

<b>Timescales- Cases presented to Panel</b>	
<b>Number of First time Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in 6 months</b>	7
<b>Number of First time Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in 6-7 months</b>	3
<b>Number of First time Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in over 7 months</b>	5
<b>Number of Fast Track Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in 4 months</b>	0
<b>Number of Fast track Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in 4-5 months</b>	0
<b>Number of Fast Track Approvals concluded ROI to ADM in over 5 months</b>	7
<b>% Regular Approvals In timescale</b>	46%
<b>% Fast Track Approvals in Timescale</b>	0%

### **Covid 19 Specific Matters**

Amended Regulations have been in place permitting flexibilities in the Adoption Regulations, including Panel business. This information is presented, to cover specifically information on use of Covid flexibilities

<b>Number of cases where reduced quoracy flexibilities were used</b>	0
<b>Number of cases where ADM made without presentation to Panel</b>	0
<b>Number of Virtual Panels</b>	28
<b>Number of panels where no Medical Advisor Present at panel</b>	9- all were additional panels
<b>Panel Chairs further comments on panel business through Covid</b>	
Comments on challenges and strengths/areas of good practice	
<p>Virtual panels have continued through the period successfully. No concerns received from members of the central list.</p> <p>There are still a few technical glitches, but these are manageable and don't disrupt the flow.</p>	

<b>Panel Chairs' comments on Central List Issues</b>
<p>The panel members wanted to express their thanks to Sue Holton for her skilled chairing and continued commitment to ATV for the first three years of the ATV Central list. She will be greatly missed.</p> <p>Likewise, a number of other central list members left during the period and the members wished to express their thanks to them also, particularly to Liz Talbot, a vice chair.</p> <p>However, a number of new members joined during the year, bringing greater diversity to the central list. This is very positive.</p> <p>Lastly, a very big welcome to the independent panel chair, Karen Simmons.</p>

## **8. Children Referred, Matched and Placed**

### 8.1 Early Notifications to ATV

	Q1&Q2	Q3 &Q4	Full Year	
Early Notifications 2019-20	88	76	164	

Early Notifications 2020-21	98	97	195	19% increase
Early Notifications 2021-22	77			21% decrease

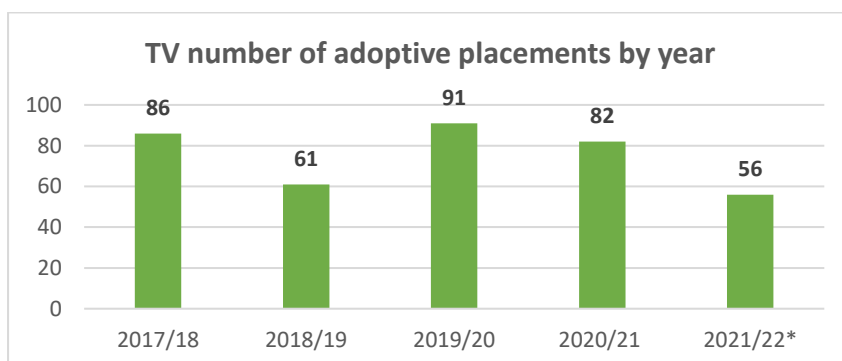
Referrals by Local Authority, in the period

Year	DBC	HBC	MBC	R&CBC	SBC	TV
2021-22	9	3	28	17	20	<b>77</b>

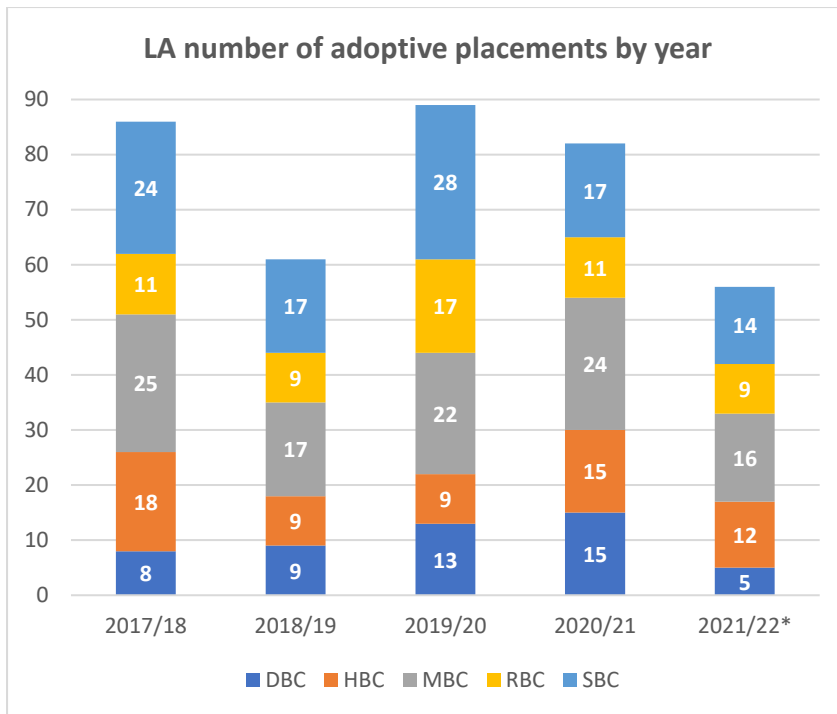
### 8.2 Placements

	2019-20 Full Year	2020-21: April-September	2020-21 Full Year	2021-22 April-September
ATV children placed with ATV adopters	60	27	52	44
ATV Children placed with external adopters	31	18	30	12
External children placed with ATV adopters	2	1	2	0
Total ATV children placed	91	45	82	<b>56</b>
Total placements	93	46	84	<b>56</b>

### 8.3 Placements by Local Authority



Last column is Q1&2



Last column is Q1&2

Placement activity has risen in the first half of this year, compared with the same period last year. In the year 2020-21 adoption had faced a period of temporary suspension of placing children, during Q1, when the pandemic first started. Adoption activity was reactivated quickly, and all children with an adoption plan were progressed, with family finding and placement activity being active throughout the final 3 quarters of 2020-21.

The data for this period- Q1 and Q2 2021-22 shows a significant rise in placement activity, although Placement Orders have remained the same, and ADM decisions that adoption is the Local Authority plan have slowed.

Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough and Stockton all show higher rates of placement activity than in the previous year. In this period Darlington have lower rates of placement activity.

Middlesbrough's care planning for adoption has been a focus for improvement as part of the LA Improvement plan, and the outcomes are beginning to be evident in increased numbers of children coming to be adopted, in a timely way.

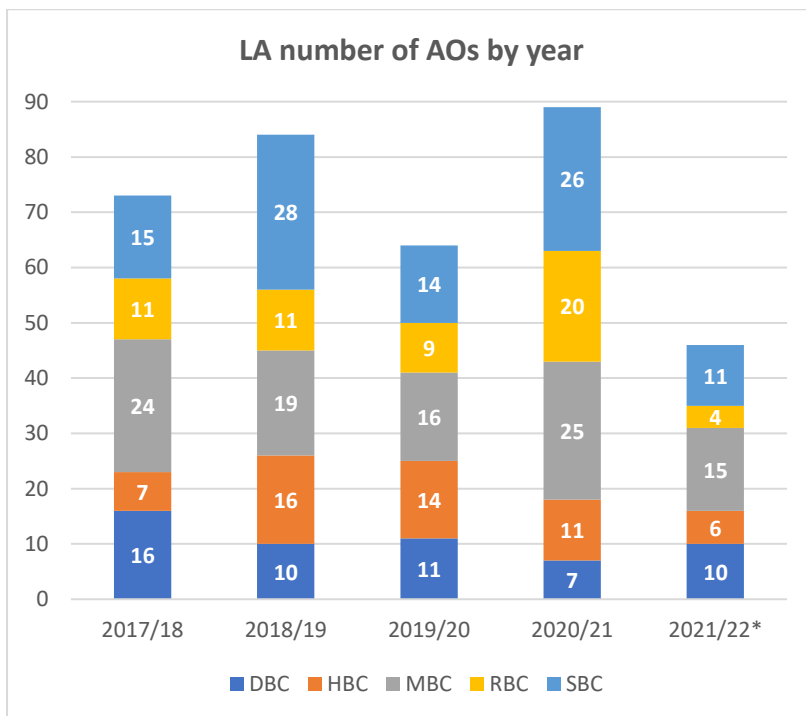
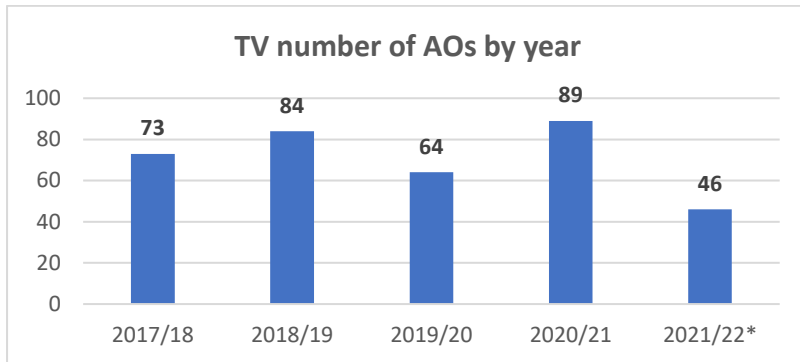
The data shows a higher rate of placement with ATV approved adopters.

44 children have been placed with internally approved adopters, compared with 27 in the same period in the previous year.

12 children have been placed with external adopters, compared with 18 in the same period last year.

This is positive in terms of pressure on the interagency external placement budget.

### 8.4 Adoption Orders Granted by Local Authority



Adoption Orders remain at a similar level of activity as the previous year, with Middlesbrough BC and Darlington BC having a notably higher rate of orders granted than the previous year.

### 8.5 Characteristics of children Adopted 2020-21, and Children Waiting with PO as of 30.9.21

	Age under 5	Age over 5	Female	Male	Ethnic Minority Heritage	Disabled	Part of Sib group	Harder to place
Adopted previous 12 months	75	18	46	47	16	2	29	45
Waiting with PO, 30.9.21	27	2	15	14	7	0	8	14
Waiting over 18 months since entering care	8	1	4	5	3	0	3	4

## 9. Disruptions

There has been one placement disruption in the period under review.

There has been a disruption meeting, chaired by an independent chair, with senior experience, of care planning and adoption. The learning from the disruption is on schedule to be reviewed by the relevant local Authority, Adoption Service, and by the Adoption panel.

## 10. Life Story Books

The completion of life story books for children with an adoption plan, in accordance with the Statutory Guidance on Adoption, has been challenging to achieve. As detailed in the Annual report, 2020-21, it has been agreed that this work should properly be undertaken by the child's social worker, in the Local Authority, as part of care planning, and direct preparation of children and work with birth families, and others important to the child.

This transfer of responsibility has been managed in a collaborative and phased way, supported by provision of guidance to children's social workers, and through working together between ATV and the 5 LA's.

Additional Temporary Adoption Support Workers have been employed to support completion of books with a long waiting time, and to support transitional arrangements. At the time of writing, and outside of the period under review, all life story books are now allocated a worker, and the procedure has been embedded within ATV and LA's to determine that responsibility is with children's social workers for this work.

The best worker for this has been supported through the Young People's Group, who have considered this issue as part of their Junior research have said that the Life Story Book should be completed by the worker who knows them, as a child, and who was responsible for their plan, and work with family and foster carers.

## **11. Adoption Support**

The service has continued with delivery of adoption support services which include:

- Post adoption support plan for all children and families from the time of placement
- Access to the Adopter Hub for all families coming through the process, to provide online support, access to information and webinars.
- Tier 1, universal support opportunities
- Loud and Clear music project, run by the Sage, Gateshead
- Tier 2, Therapeutic Parenting Training
- Specialist adoption support assessments, undertaken by the adoption support team
- Education support
- Access to therapeutic support, by one of the preferred Therapy providers, as determined by the adoption support assessment
- Children's group has been reconvened, focussing on life story and experiences of adopted children in school

### 11.1 Adoption Support Referrals and Assessments

	<b>Full Year 2020-21</b>	<b>1.3.21-30.9.21</b>
Number of adoption support referrals	83	49
Access to Files requests/completed	36	23
Birth Parent Support Referrals (Q3 &4 2020-21)	23	24
Adoption Support Assessments completed	55	46
Successful application to ASF	166	125

Unsuccessful application to ASF	0	0
Value of applications to ASF	£637,551 + £70,965 Covid	£434,553
Education Support Cases during year	59	41
Number of Post Box Contract Agreements	279	Not available

There have been 49 referrals for adoption support assessments in this period, and 46 assessments were completed.

125 applications were made to the ASF, totalling £434,553

The reason more applications than assessments, is because group funding requires applications for each of the participants.

The rate of adoption support referrals, and assessments has increased again, following a significant reduction over the previous full year. Waiting lists for adoption support assessments remain too long, and the service is proactively addressing this issue.

Applications and awards from the ASF have been at their highest rate since ATV commenced in this quarter, indicating that funded adoption support services are at their highest, and more families are accessing adoption support.

### 11.2 Therapeutic Parenting Groups delivered

Therapeutic parenting programmes form part of the ATV Tier 2, targeted support which is provided to families, who have children with additional needs, and presenting behaviours.

2 NVR (non-Violent Resistance) groups were run in April 2021, and September 2021. These were attended by a total of 14 families who received a programme of supportive group therapeutic parenting training, to help with parenting children who are violent to their parents.

A Nurturing Attachments programme was offered in September 2021, with 7 families attending.

A Future Stars Sensory Attachment programme was delivered in July 2021 which involved 3 families and their children.

### 11.3 Education Support



The Education Support Worker has worked with 41 children and families in this period. This service is now becoming embedded within the overall ATV offer and is being effective and utilised.

#### 11.4 Access to Adoption Records, and Birth Parent Support

These services are commissioned by Adoption Tees Valley from Adoption Matters, who have the contract. Access to Records is a service provision, and demand is led by the personal circumstances of adult adoptees.

Information about independent birth parent support is provided by Local Authorities, to birth parents, during care planning and referral options are made available to them once adoption becomes the LA plan.

ATV have promoted this service within Local Authorities; however, it is felt that better outcome would be indicated through higher numbers of birth parents accessing this service.

A further period of promotion of this service is underway with local authorities including with IRO's.

#### 11.5 Adopter Hub

The service has commissioned the Adopter Hub from PACT, Parents and Children Together, which is a large Voluntary Adoption Agency.

This was originally commissioned through covid funding however has been continued, as it offers a significant additional online resource, and tool for prospective adopters going through assessment, matching and placement.

The service has commissioned 200 licenses, and all are in use.

The service will operate moving forwards with a time limit to the period when licenses will be funded by ATV in order to be sustainable. Adopters will be offered the opportunity to privately fund this, once their period ends, should they so wish.

### **12. Young People's Voice and Views**

Young people in ATV have been supported to come together via research undertaken within ATV, into life story work. Young people have worked together with researcher Helen Woolley, a PhD student, to help design and develop a research methodology, which explores life stories for children.

The young people's group has been called the Junior Researchers and has proved to be the foundation for young people's group work, and involvement in ATV.

The young people have been supported to make a film, through collaboration with Virtual Schools, and a digital Film Company, called Digital

Voice. The completed production is outside of the timescale of this Bi Annual Report, however the work, and beginnings of the young people's inclusion in development of the service at ATV commenced within the period under review.

There has now been investment in a dedicated resource to work directly with young people, as part of ensuring their voice and views influence the development of ATV. A part time adoption support worker will work directly with young people, on matters that are important to them, and areas where we can improve the long term supports to benefit all adopted young people directly.

A fuller outline of young people's involvement will be provided within the 2021-22 Annual Report.

### **13. Quality Assurance**

#### 13.1 Case Practice Audits

The service has completed case practice audits with workers, to embed a shared approach to case review, quality of practice and evidence on the record of outcomes, and timeliness.

An overview report has been presented to the ATV board, although this is outside of this review period.

Referrals were found to be working well in most cases, and the Permanence Champion role was evident and having an impact on follow through and timeliness. The audit picked up one case of a very late referral to ATV, which led to delay in commencing family finding.

Managing decision making about progressing with foster carer assessments, where FC's wish to adopt the child in their care is an area for greater clarity. ATV will be undertaking training within LA's over the next few months, and a focus will be given to the early stages of decision making and progressing with referrals to assess foster carers, as adoptive parents. Not all records were on file for children progressing through the adoption journey.

Management oversight on cases was not always evident on records. This has been considered by ATV. Managers regularly supervise cases, but do not always add this to individual records, which will be addressed.

ATV adopter assessments showed lengthy delays to stage 1, but stage 2 was almost always within timescale.

An action plan has been put in place and a further "Audit Fortnight" is underway, to review cases. These are focussed on one Local Authority, in preparation for an Ofsted Monitoring Visit.

The following mechanisms have been implemented for managing and monitoring the work of the agency, and the quality of work.

- The Review of ATV has been a wide reaching review, to assess progress of the RAA against the agreed objectives that were set out at the implementation of the RAA. Outcomes, findings and areas for further development have been highlighted in this report.
- Tracking systems are in place to enable regular monitoring of children and adopter journeys; timeliness, and outcomes.
- Tracking of children enables focussed discussions with Adoption Lead officers quarterly, or as required, to ensure that individual children's plans are progressed in a timely way, and that thematic practice issues within Local Authorities are addressed.
- A performance, assurance and challenge meeting (PAC) is held with the senior adoption lead for each LA, quarterly following ASGLB and ATV Scorecard data returns. All children for each LA have been tracked and monitored, and agreement about direction, or decisions signposted where applicable.
- Permanence Champions (Senior Social Workers, or Assistant Team managers) allocated to each Local Authority ensure that children's referrals are progressed and tracked in a timely way. This means that ATV can family find for children at the right time, and with the right information about that child's plan.
- ATV attends one Local Authority (Middlesbrough) Permanence Monitoring Group, monthly, and the Gateway panel monthly, to assist with the improvement journey for that LA, and with quality and timeliness of practice for children.
- The balanced scorecard (BSC) has been reviewed and developed to better reflect nationally submitted data, via ASGLB returns from Local Authorities and Adoption Tees Valley. The BSC is generated quarterly detailing key performance data for ATV and the 5 partner Local Authorities, user feedback/satisfaction measures; complaints, compliments; finance. This has been presented to the Board, which has a role in questioning, challenge and being satisfied of the effectiveness of the service.
- The Adoption Panel has a quality monitoring role in the Service around business presented to it, for consideration and advice. Quality of PARS is felt to be high, with some recommendations about consistency of practice across PAR's. Quality of CPR's is generally improved, although some remain poor. Minutes now detail feedback on quality of CPR in order that ADMs in Local Authorities are appraised of panel comments around quality of the CPR. Panel has commented on improvements to the Adoption Support Plan, and APR.

- The Adoption Panel Chairs provide a report bi-annually to the Service Manager, which will be presented to the Board; Panel; and to the team, for learning and improvement where required.
- Staff performance is monitored via supervision, which is monthly for all staff.
- 21 Case practice audits were undertaken, across a sample of case records, with managers independent of that case, and the worker. A thematic report has been provided to the ATV Board.
- Most staff, and all managers have had an annual appraisal.
- All Central List members and Panel Chairs have had an annual appraisal. Panel chairs now request that the agency collates themes from appraisal for the annual report. Panel training has been delivered to panel members arising from feedback from panel appraisals, which includes Disruptions; Roles and Operational processes for ATV; early Permanence.
- Team meetings take place monthly, and are used to convey policy and practice information, involve staff in developments and any quality improvements that are required.
- Adopter feedback has been sought as part of the review, via an independent survey.
- The Service Manager, and Team Manager, post adoption support, have reviewed and monitored work undertaken by external agencies for post adoption support, to ensure that work supports outcomes and delivers best value.

#### **14. Finance**

Adoption Tees Valley is joint funded as a shared service under the Education and Adoption Act (2016) and is a joint funded on a shared basis, with the allocations of funding per LA as detailed below.

	<b>Baseline Running Costs</b> (based on former costs of the Adoption Services in the year preceding the RAA)	<b>Percentage Interagency fee contributions</b> (based on average annual adoption numbers 2014/15 to 2016/17)
<b>Darlington</b>	16.2%	20.2%
<b>Hartlepool</b>	13.5 %	14.0%
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	31.8%	27.2%
<b>Redcar and Cleveland</b>	16.7.%	14.0%
<b>Stockton</b>	21 %	24.6%
	100%	100.0%

Funding ratios have been reviewed as part of the overall service review, and have been presented to Directors of Finance, who have now agreed the revised funding split. This will be fully detailed within the full Annual Report.

#### 14.1 2021-22 Financial Q2 (Half Year) Position

Expenditure Heading	Budget 2021/22	Actual Outturn	Variance period end
Employees	1,331,000	1,400,000	69,000
Running Costs	287,000	263,000	-24,000
Support Service Costs	113,000	114,000	1,000
Interagency Fees	500,000	725,000	225,000
Income	(2,231,000)	(2,501,000)	(270,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,000)</b>	<b>(1,000)</b>

#### 14.2 Interagency Fees

Interagency fees are payable for those children matched with adopters who are not recruited by ATV. The budget for interagency fees is £500,000 and forecast overspend is £225,000.

The outcome of the ATV Service Review has addressed increase in adoption activity since the RAA commenced, and invest to save, to reduce external spend on IA fees.

This will be reported in full annual report.

For the financial year 2021-22 the additional contributions are as follows:

	Budgeted Contribution to Interagency Fees £	Forecast 2021-22 £	Additional Contribution 2021/22
<b>ATV Interagency 2020/21</b>	<b>500,000</b>	<b>725,000</b>	<b>225,000</b>
Darlington - 20.2%	101,000	146,450	83,000
Hartlepool - 14%	70,000	101,500	57,000
Middlesbrough - 27.2%	136,000	197,200	111,000
Redcar & Cleveland - 14%	70,000	101,500	57,000
Stockton -24.6%	123,000	178,350	101,000

## 15. Development Plans ATV

The Annual Report 2020-21 identified the development areas, below. Progress with these is set out.

Area for Development	Progress	Next steps
Strengthening voice and involvement of adopted children in ATV	Young people have become involved, including in views on life story work, and on the experience of adopted children in education. They have made a film, now widely shared for education and awareness.	Appointment to a dedicated YP worker, to support inclusion and involvement
Strengthening preparation and assessment of adopters, to support more adopters taking more children with additional needs	This work is underway and will continue. Evidence of impact is the higher numbers of in house placements, for priority children, and fewer external placements.	Strengthening assessment to support pathway will continue
Strengthening sufficiency of adopters, through increased marketing	Approval numbers are fewer this period, however this is seen in wider agencies, and is as a result of the pandemic. 50 % of children have been placed regionally where they cannot be placed with in house adopters and waiting times have reduced.	Invest to save business case for more assessment capacity to recruit internal adopters
Taking early permanence strategy to the next stage – phase 2	ATV is working with the national RAA and multi-agency workstream to align all work with national developments. ATV is renewing regional training to IRO's and all LAs via workforce development. ATV now leads a strategic working group with Fostering Service managers to strengthen cross agency work on EP.	Support regional EP co-ordinator role and continue to progress EP development with regional partners.
Strengthen partnership working, including with early help, to strengthen support to adopters when they need it.	Work ongoing. Independent adoption support audit planned to evaluate ATV/Regional approach to adoption support.	Adoption Support audit. Revised work with Early help partners.
Continuing to address life story book model.	Life story books and work now returned to be the responsibility of the child's social workers. All LS books allocated at the time of writing.	Support CSW's where needed to complete LS books.
Continuing to address timescales for adoption support assessments	Timescales for starting the assessment remain long. The service has a relatively small resource for adoption support. This	The adoption support audit will assist with

	has been reconsidered within the review.	reviewing service delivery and offer.
Taking forward Panel improvements to maintain a streamlined approach to panel, and quality CPR's	Panel manager and Advisor post has been created, which will have a lead role in managing panel business and quality assurance of ATV and LA reports	Recruit to Panel Manager post

Vicky Davidson Boyd

Service Manager

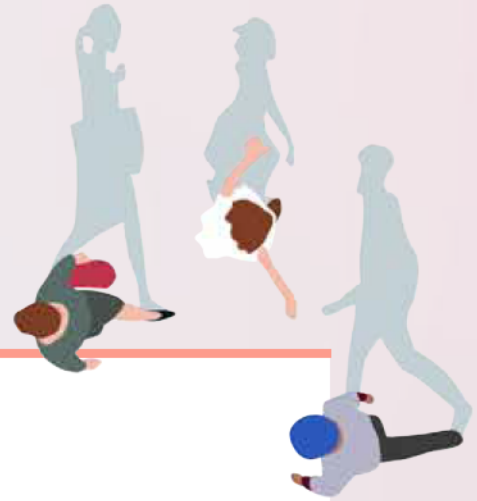
Adoption Tees Valley 25.2.22

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What Works for  
**Children's  
Social Care**



# **STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, PROTECTING CHILDREN: NO WRONG DOOR**

**PILOT EVALUATION REPORT  
MIDDLESBROUGH**

November 2021





## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank North Yorkshire County Council for supporting the design of the evaluation as well as staff and families at Middlesbrough Borough Council, including staff, parents and carers, young people and foster carers at Futures For Families, for supporting the evaluation and sharing their experiences with us. We would also like to thank the Department for Education for their funding and support throughout the evaluation process. We are also grateful to evaluators from the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme for sharing insights from their work with the No Wrong Door model to help with planning our evaluation.

## Funding

Department for Education, England.

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## About What Works for Children's Social Care

What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCS) seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social

care sector. We generate, collate and make accessible the best evidence for practitioners, policy makers and practice leaders to improve children's social care and the outcomes it generates for children and families.

To find out more visit the WWCS at: [whatworks-csc.org.uk](http://whatworks-csc.org.uk)

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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**ASYE:** Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

**CiN:** Child in Need

**CLA :** Child / Children Looked After

**CP:** Child Protection

**CSC:** Children's Social Care

**DfE:** Department for Education

**FFF:** Futures for Families (local name given to the NWD model in Middlesbrough)

**FTE:** Full Time Equivalent

**IPE:** Implementation and Process Evaluation

**IRO:** Independent Reviewing Officer

**LA:** Local Authority

**NEET:** Not in Education, Employment or Training

**NWD:** No Wrong Door

**PLO:** Public Law Outline

**RAISE:** Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation

**RCT:** Randomised Controlled Trial

**SDQ:** Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

**SFPC:** Strengthening Families, Protecting Children

**WWCSC:** What Works for Children's Social Care

**YOS:** Youth Offending Service



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

This report presents findings from a pilot evaluation of the No Wrong Door (NWD) model in Middlesbrough. This was commissioned by the Department for Education as part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) programme. SFPC involves scaling of three models of social work practice (No Wrong Door, Family Valued, and Family Safeguarding) which aim to enable more children to stay at home in safe and stable family environments.

NWD was developed by North Yorkshire County Council with support from the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. The NWD model in North Yorkshire aims to support young people aged 12 - 25 who are in care or on the edge of care, promoting stability and permanency within their families or local communities. The NWD model in North Yorkshire involves:

- The creation of hubs which provide a range of services, outreach and accommodation options to young people who are in care or on the edge of care.
- An integrated multidisciplinary team which includes residential and outreach key workers, portfolio leads, a life coach (clinical psychologist), a communication support worker (speech and language therapist), a police liaison officer and police intelligence analyst, a performance and intelligence analyst, foster carers and supported lodgings workers.

- Staff use strengths-based and restorative approaches, and practice is informed by principles called Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations which promote a core offer of flexible and creative support, high aspirations for young people, and use of residential care as a short term intervention not long term solution, promoting permanence for young people within their families or communities.

Middlesbrough began recruitment in Autumn 2019 and launched the NWD model (known locally as Futures for Families) in September 2020 to work with children and young people aged 11-18. An Ofsted judgment of 'inadequate' in January 2020, and the national lockdown of social and economic activity in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK, had implications for implementation of NWD in Middlesbrough, which was delayed by approximately five months.

## Research questions

This pilot aimed to provide early insights into the rollout of NWD in a new area by answering three key research questions.

1. **Evidence of Feasibility** i.e. Can the intervention be delivered as intended, is it well received by those delivering and receiving it, and what are the contextual facilitators and barriers?
2. **Evidence of Promise** i.e. What evidence is there that the intervention mechanism operates as expected and that it can have a positive impact on outcomes?



- 3. Readiness for Trial** i.e. How consistently can the intervention be delivered and is the programme sufficiently codified to operate at scale?

This pilot is not designed to consider the impact of NWD on outcomes. This will be considered in the next phase of the evaluation (Schoenwald et al., 2020).

## Methods

Data collected between February 2020 and June 2021 included interviews, focus groups and a survey of staff working in Middlesbrough's FFF service. We also carried out interviews with young people and their parents and carers, observations of practice, and collected administrative data about intervention delivery.

## Key findings

### Evidence of Feasibility

#### Was the intervention implemented as intended?

Middlesbrough's FFF service successfully recruited most intended staff, with only two out of thirty posts vacant after three months. The consistency of key workers, the offer of both outreach support and placements in the service, and having at least monthly case reviews were all in line with the NWD model. Support offered and placements were flexible according to the individual's needs. The proportion of staff who had completed restorative practice training was slightly below the expected 80%, (68% at the time of the launch and 74% three months later), although solution focused training had been completed by 80% and 90% of staff respectively.

Although local adaptations were made, practice was largely consistent with

North Yorkshire County Council's NWD Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations. There were some instances where these were harder to achieve, such as challenges finding a suitable foster care placement for a young person, and attendance of all appropriate multi-agency professionals at RAISE (Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation) meetings.

#### Is the intervention well received by staff and families?

Staff in Middlesbrough's FFF service were largely positive about the NWD model and the training they had received. Families reported positive relationships with FFF staff, and described that support was intensive, responsive and flexible to their needs. Some families noted this was support they had not received in the past when they had needed it.

#### What are the contextual barriers and facilitators?

Most FFF staff reported sufficient buy-in from leadership for the NWD model, and the FFF service had begun to influence wider practice in children's social care. Staff reported having enough time and feeling confident using the NWD model. However, managing the competing demands within the service was also a challenge, including balancing support for young people in FFF placements with outreach work. Other challenges included clarity over referral criteria for the FFF service, and difficulty recruiting FFF foster carers. Close working with social workers was reported to be important, but being separate from social work teams was thought to help building relationships with families. Having opportunities to bond as a team and regular reminders of the Provocations and Non-Negotiables were reported to be helpful to support practice.



## Evidence of Promise

### Is there evidence to support the theory of change as set out in the logic model?

The support provided through Middlesbrough's FFF service was largely in line with what was expected. Key workers supported young people in a range of ways including daily routines, addressing risk, engagement in education, and parenting support. Support from the multidisciplinary staff team was also flexible and available out of hours where needed. Information sharing was generally reported to be good. Risk management processes included intelligence provided by the police analyst role, and the use of multidisciplinary RAISE (Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation) meetings.

Staff in Middlesbrough's FFF service worked restoratively with families through building relationships, making decisions together and listening to the young person's voice, although some staff reported confusion over whether Signs of Safety should still be used. This highlights the importance of clear guidance on integrating the NWD model with existing or previous practice models.

### What elements of the model are perceived to be central to effectiveness?

Having a skilled in-house multidisciplinary team offering support to families faster than it would be accessed through usual service was considered central to the model. Another key element was the intensive, flexible and responsive nature of the service with professionals seeing young people regularly, responding quickly and being available out of usual working hours. Listening to the young person's voice and understanding their needs was also a key component.

### What potential impacts of the intervention do stakeholders identify?

Staff and families identified a number of potential benefits of the NWD model. These included reducing risk and increasing safety for young people, reducing and preventing entry to care, improving reunification, reducing use of external residential care and out of area placements. Potential benefits for education and wellbeing were also noted.

### Do there appear to be any unintended consequences or negative effects?

Two potential unintended consequences were identified. Firstly, it was reported that there was some uncertainty about how the NWD model fitted with the support offered by other outreach teams within children's services in Middlesbrough, but that careful communication had been in place to manage this. Secondly, it was reported some young people may experience instability through the FFF service. For example, due to the temporary nature of FFF placements, change in other residents at the hub, or by having an abrupt ending to support from the hub.

## Readiness for Trial

### Is there a clear description of the intervention that would allow it to be implemented and evaluated in other places?

The initial logic model at the outset of this pilot evaluation was largely supported by the pilot findings. A revised logic model which includes additional mechanisms identified in this pilot evaluation is presented in Appendix D, outlining the intervention and the facilitators and barriers to implementation. This provides a clear description of the intervention that can be used to inform future implementation and evaluation.



### Can the intervention be delivered consistently across teams?

Some social workers reported differences in the support provided for young people with different needs. In particular, some staff reported that young people in care received a shorter period of intervention from the FFF service than young people who were on the edge of care received.

### Are any changes needed to the theory, materials or procedures before rollout?

Our findings suggest that it is possible to deliver NWD in a new local authority. The conclusions in this report highlight a number of factors that are important to ensure successful rollout of NWD. Staff we spoke to also mentioned factors that could be considered in further developing the model. These include offering NWD services that have more capacity, closer joint working between supervising social workers and NWD services, and clarity around the criteria for young people who can stay in NWD placements for both NWD staff and for referring practitioners.

## Discussion

This evaluation captures the early stages of implementation of the No Wrong Door model in Middlesbrough, and is therefore unable to capture the longer term embedding of the model into children's services more widely. Nevertheless, there is some promising evidence that parts of the NWD model, such as the deep dive approach, and the Non-Negotiables, Distinguishers and Provocations are beginning to be used beyond No Wrong Door by wider children's social care teams. Other factors affecting delivery in Middlesbrough included the national lockdown of social and economic activity

due to COVID-19, the Ofsted judgement of 'inadequate' in January 2020 and also shortages in foster carers with suitable experience. Some staff reported feeling that this Ofsted judgement created the conditions to allow something new to come in and that the model thus landed well with staff. Alongside the NWD model, Middlesbrough have also implemented other strategies as part of their improvement journey, to achieve aims such as reducing their use of out of area placements. All these factors should be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this pilot evaluation, and should be taken into consideration in any future assessment of the impact of NWD in a given authority.







## Conclusions and Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on what worked well in Middlesbrough, as well as ways in which delivery could be further improved. When introducing NWD and embedding the model in a new area, local decision makers should:

- Ensure staffing capacity to respond to the needs of young people who are in placements and those who require outreach support.
- Provide comprehensive training and guidance for referring practitioners, such as an e-learning package and refresher support, as needed. Ensure that multi-agency partners receive appropriate guidance on the NWD model and are encouraged to attend RAISE meetings.
- Be provided with guidance for achieving a consistent approach to practice across children's services and how any existing practice models should be used in conjunction with the model.

- Ensure a sufficient supply of foster carers suitable to care for teenagers, to enable young people to be supported to move into stable family based placements.
- Ensure regular opportunities to revisit the NWD approach, including opportunities for the multidisciplinary team to build relationships and work together, as well as training for later starters.

As a pilot evaluation, findings can be used to understand how NWD is delivered in a new area, but are not designed to answer questions about the impact of NWD on outcomes. The next step to build on these findings is an impact evaluation being led by What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC).<sup>1</sup> This is being undertaken in four local authorities which are introducing NWD between 2020 and 2022. All four local authorities have now begun delivering a NWD service. This evaluation will follow these authorities over time to consider the impact of NWD on the likelihood of children being looked after as well as how the intervention is being delivered to further improve understanding of the model.

<sup>1</sup> This stepped-wedge cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) and Difference in Differences analysis is set out in our trial protocol (Schoenwald et al., 2020)



# INTRODUCTION

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## Project background

This report presents a pilot evaluation of the No Wrong Door (NWD) model. NWD establishes hubs which bring together an integrated range of accommodation options, services and outreach, under a single management umbrella, to support young people in care or on the edge of care. This model was developed by North Yorkshire County Council as part of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (Lushey et al, 2017).

This evaluation is part of the Department for Education's Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) programme. SFPC involves the scaling of three distinct models of social work practice. These aim to enable more children to stay at home in safe and stable family environments, by strengthening local practice to meet children and young people's needs, building resilience in families and enabling social workers to manage risk more confidently. These three models are Family Valued (Mason et al., 2017), Family Safeguarding (Forrester et al., 2017) and No Wrong Door (Lushey et al., 2017). The SFPC programme is being delivered through a phased rollout in 17 participating local authorities, beginning in 2019.

The total number of children looked after in the UK has increased every year since 2010 (NSPCC, 2021). In March 2020, the number of children looked after by local authorities in England rose to 80,080, equivalent to a rate of 67 per 10,000 children - up from

65 in 2019 and 64 in 2018 (Department for Education, 2021a). Despite this, the number of children who started to be looked after decreased from 31,770 in 2019 to 30,970 in 2020 (Department for Education, 2021a). A sector-led review of the care crisis (Family Rights Group, 2018) suggests change should focus on relationship building within children's social care and the family justice system, within and between families, practitioners and agencies. A systematic scoping review (What Works for Children's Social Care, 2018) asking what works to safely reduce the number of children in statutory care emphasized the importance of practice and structural changes. Exploratory analyses of the rates of children looked after in English authorities (2012 - 2017) identified participation in the DfE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme as one of three factors associated with a decrease in the rates of children in care (Department for Education, 2021b).

## No Wrong Door (NWD)

No Wrong Door (NWD) is a multidisciplinary service embedded within children's social care to which professionals can make referrals. NWD requires alignment of the wider children's services to be able to operate effectively. Key components of the NWD model in North Yorkshire County Council include:

- The creation of one or more NWD hubs which deliver a range of services, outreach and accommodation options



to support young people aged 12-25 who are edging towards care, on the edge of care, or in care, including those at risk of family or placement breakdown, stepping down from residential care to family based care, or transitioning to independent living.

- Support provided through **NWD placements as well as outreach** work to young people living at home with their family or who are in non-NWD foster care or residential placements.
- Services are provided by an **integrated multidisciplinary team** which includes residential and outreach key workers, portfolio leads, a life coach (clinical psychologist, a communication support worker (speech and language therapist), a police liaison officer, police intelligence analyst, performance and intelligence analyst, foster carers and supported lodgings workers.
- Staff use **strengths-based and restorative** approaches to develop and deliver a support package in partnership with young people based on their needs, strengths and aspirations, supporting them to reach their full potential.
- Practice in NWD is informed by a set of **ten Distinguishers, eight Non-Negotiables and four Provocations** which are a set of principles and core values informing practice. Examples of these include 'Always progressing to permanence within a family or community' and 'Bring young people into NWD quickly but move them out slowly'. These promote a core offer of flexible and creative support, high aspirations for young people, and use of residential care as a short term intervention not long term solution, **promoting**

**permanence** for young people within their families or communities. The full set of NWD Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations, as well as local Provocations established in Middlesbrough are available in Appendix C.

- Guidance about the NWD service is provided to social work teams supporting children and young people in care or on the edge of care. This guidance supports **social work teams to make referrals to the NWD service for support and to practice in a way that is consistent with the NWD Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations**. The NWD service works in partnership with social workers and other multi-agency partners when delivering support to young people and their families.

A revised logic model setting out the assumptions and contextual factors, interventions, mechanisms and outcomes for the NWD model, based on the findings of this pilot evaluation, is available in Appendix D.

## Previous evaluation

Findings from a previous evaluation of NWD are based largely on pre-post data, with some comparison to a matched cohort, but cannot conclusively attribute impact to the NWD model. This evaluation of NWD in North Yorkshire (Lushey et al, 2017) reported an increase of young people ceasing to be looked after, decreased placement moves, and fewer days spent in care placements, as well as lower out of area placements relative to national averages. While not conclusive evidence of impact, these findings suggest evidence of promise for the NWD model.



## Pilot context

### Pilot local authority

Local authorities eligible for SFPC were those with an Ofsted rating of 'requires improvement to be good' at the point of application, high rates of children looked after compared to their local authority statistical neighbour median over the last three years, or rising rates of children looked after in each of the last three years. These were identified and selected by the Department for Education in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council following a rigorous process, covering assessments of need, suitability and commitment to making a whole system change. Middlesbrough was selected to be the first local authority to receive NWD under SFPC. Recruitment of management roles began in Autumn 2019, recruitment and training of other staff took place in 2020, and Middlesbrough launched the NWD model, known locally as Futures for Families (FFF), in September 2020. Rollout of NWD followed an expression of interest process followed by a proposal to the Department for Education SFPC programme board which set out the planned phases of delivery.

Middlesbrough is a Unitary Authority in the North East of England. According to the English Indices of Deprivation (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019), Middlesbrough has the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally, with 48.8% falling into this most deprived group. Additionally, Middlesbrough is the district with the highest proportion of children living in income-deprived households. In March 2020, Middlesbrough's rate of children looked after was 189 children per 10,000, one of the highest proportions in England (Department for Education, 2021a). The proportion of children looked after in

Middlesbrough is considerably higher than national figures and has increased from 73 children per 10,000 in 2006 (Department for Education, 2010).

The most recent Ofsted inspection of children's social care services in Middlesbrough gave an overall judgment of 'inadequate' in January 2020. This rating led to the appointment of a commissioner to undertake a review and make recommendations for the local authority. This process led to a delay in the implementation of No Wrong Door in Middlesbrough, however ultimately the commissioner concluded that implementation of No Wrong Door should continue as planned.

Middlesbrough children's social care services are delivered through separate teams for assessment: children looked after (CLA), child in need and child protection. This differs from North Yorkshire where NWD was developed, where local teams undertake assessment and handover of young people's cases between teams is minimised. In Middlesbrough, an edge of care team sits under the children's care directorate. Middlesbrough have been embedding Signs of Safety across children's social care since 2018, a model which is also used in North Yorkshire where NWD was developed.

NWD is being introduced in Middlesbrough alongside a wider edge of care plan in the area. One of the aims of Middlesbrough's edge of care plan was to increase the number of residential beds and reduce the high numbers of young people in external residential placements (i.e those outside of LA provision including those outside of the Middlesbrough area). NWD also aimed to benefit young people in care and on the edge of care, and impact on the wider social care system. Building on North Yorkshire



County Council's approach, a local set of Provocations and Non-Negotiables were developed for the Futures for Families service. Examples of these locally tailored statements include 'As a parent, would I be happy with this for my child?', and 'The voice of the child at the centre of their journey!' The full list of the North Yorkshire County Council Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations as well as the tailored Middlesbrough Provocations and Non-Negotiables are available in Appendix C. NWD in Middlesbrough was designed for young people aged 11-18, slightly different to the 12-25 age range in North Yorkshire where the model was developed.

Before NWD was introduced, Middlesbrough had four residential homes. These were a

three bed and a four bed residential unit, a four bed unit for children and young people with disabilities, and a short break provision offering respite for children with disabilities. Another two bed provision, and a semi-independent living unit with nine self-contained flats for 16 and 17 year-olds was also due to open. Residential provision was largely Outstanding or Good, although one recent Ofsted inspection had downgraded to Requires Improvement prior to NWD being introduced.

Throughout this report, we refer to 'NWD' when discussing North Yorkshire County Council's No Wrong Door model, and 'FFF' when discussing Middlesbrough's Futures for Families service.



## Covid-19

The roll-out of the NWD model in Middlesbrough was impacted by the national lockdown of social and economic activity which was introduced on 23rd March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This lockdown affected how social workers, other professionals and safeguarding partners were able to practice. Schools were closed to all but children of critical workers and vulnerable children (Department for Education, 2021c). While statutory work continued as required, many other services were provided only virtually or not at all, and guidelines and restrictions were in place affecting direct work. Families experienced health, employment, financial, social and emotional challenges. These changes may have simultaneously affected the level of need but also the identification of need in children and families. The roll out of the NWD model in Middlesbrough was delayed by several months during this period, and there were changes in the ways of working such as some training and meetings being conducted virtually rather than face-to-face. Although the launch of Middlesbrough's Futures for Families hub was delayed to September 2020, during this period FFF staff who had already been recruited began providing support during this time to help reduce the number of young people entering care and to support placement stability..

## Evaluation by WWCS

The pilot evaluation, which is the focus of this report, is the first of a three-part evaluation. For each of the three models in SFPC, WWCS are undertaking:

1. A pilot evaluation in one 'Trailblazer' local authority (LA). This is the focus of this report.<sup>2</sup>
2. An impact evaluation in four or five subsequent LAs (depending on the model).<sup>3</sup> This stepped wedge cluster Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) and Difference in Differences approach aims to build on previous evaluations of NWD by providing a robust comparison group and a reliable impact evaluation of NWD.<sup>4</sup>
3. An Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) across these same four or five local authorities, to understand the delivery during the rollout of the model.



- 2 Pilot evaluation protocol (Sanders et al., 2019)
- 3 Trailblazer local authorities are not included in the impact evaluation of SFPC
- 4 Trial and Implementation and Process evaluation protocol (Schoenwald et al., 2020)



# METHODS

## Research questions

This pilot evaluation aimed to build on previous evaluations of NWD. It sought to provide early insights into the rollout of the model, in a LA outside of the one in which it was developed, develop and refine a logic model setting out a detailed understanding of the programme theory, provide an in-depth focus on the early stages of implementation, and inform the next phase of the evaluation (Schoenwald et al, 2020). The pilot sought to test three objectives:

### Evidence of Feasibility

- a. Was the intervention implemented as intended (i.e. as set out in the logic model) and in what way does implementation vary (if at all)?
- b. What are the contextual barriers and facilitators for delivery of the intervention, and are these accurately captured in the logic model?
- c. Is the intervention acceptable to (well received by) key stakeholders including senior leaders, staff and practitioners working directly with children and families, and families?

### Evidence of Promise

- a. Is there evidence to support the intervention theory of change as set out in the logic model, including the mechanisms by which change is achieved, and the facilitators and barriers to change?

- b. Is variation in implementation perceived by stakeholders to relate to outcomes, and which elements of the model are perceived to be central to its effectiveness?
- c. What potential impacts of the intervention do stakeholders identify?
- d. Do there appear to be any unintended consequences or negative effects?

### Readiness for Trial

- a. Is there a clear description of the intervention and the contextual facilitators and barriers that would allow it to be implemented and evaluated in other places?
- b. Is the intervention able to be delivered consistently across teams?
- c. Are any changes needed to the theory, materials or procedures before rollout?

As a pilot evaluation, findings can be used to understand how NWD is delivered in a new area, but are not designed to answer questions about the impact of NWD on outcomes. This will be considered in the next phase of the evaluation (Schoenwald et al., 2019).

## Research design

This pilot evaluation employs a mixed-method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The full research design and methods are presented in the pilot protocol (Sanders et al, 2019).



**Table 1. Data collected in this pilot evaluation**

	<b>Baseline (Feb 2020)</b>	<b>Follow-up (March - June 2021)</b>
Interviews with leaders and managers	7	6
Focus groups with leaders and managers	N/A	1 (4 attendees)
Focus groups with frontline practitioners	2 (4 attendees in each)	2 (4 attendees in each)
Interviews with foster carers	3	2
Interviews with residential workers	3	N/A
Interviews with family members	N/A	5
Total number of individuals in interviews and focus groups	21 staff	20 staff
5 family members	N/A	43
Observations of practice	N/A	4
Survey of staff	N/A	16
<b>Admin data Period</b>	July - September 2020	October - December 2020

### Data Collection

Between February 2020 and June 2021 we undertook a series of data collection in Middlesbrough, spanning two distinct timeframes. Baseline data collection (February 2020) was completed before the national lockdown. Evaluation activities planned at follow up were affected. Due to delivery delays, the timing of follow-up data collection was delayed (from July 2020 to March 2021) to allow for a delayed implementation of NWD in Middlesbrough. Furthermore, all data collection activity at follow up was required to be undertaken virtually.

Baseline data was collected in person in February 2020 during the early stages of implementation and before the FFF service was opened. Seven interviews were conducted with leaders and managers with oversight for services intended to deliver or refer to the NWD model. Interviews were also conducted with three residential workers and three foster carers. Two focus groups were undertaken, one with two social workers and the other with four social workers that worked within child protection and child in need, children looked after, and fostering teams.

Follow up data was collected virtually between March 2021 to June 2021 after a





sustained period of early implementation. Three phone interviews were undertaken with young people who were being supported by the FFF service. Phone interviews were also conducted with two parents and two foster carers (one FFF foster carer who supports young people through short placements as part of the FFF model, and one mainstream foster carer who was supporting a young person FFF was providing outreach support for). Six video interviews were conducted with senior leaders and managers with oversight for services delivering or referring to FFF, including the FFF manager and a deputy manager. Three virtual focus groups were undertaken, one with FFF portfolio leads and resource workers, one with social workers working with young people being supported by FFF, and one with four heads of service. Four virtual observations were undertaken. These covered a team meeting, two Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation (RAISE) meetings and a group supervision. The survey was completed by 16 respondents, between 25th May and 4th June 2021. Respondents were five senior resource workers, four resource workers, the communication support worker, life coach, police liaison officer and police analyst, performance and intelligence analyst, the deputy hub manager and a business support worker. Resource workers who responded reported being responsible for both hub and outreach work. All senior resource workers were portfolio leads (for Risk Management, Health and Activities, Education and Parenting).<sup>5</sup>

### Sample recruitment and selection criteria

Participants were sampled purposively to cover a range of characteristics. We

engaged with staff across a range of roles within the FFF service. We also spoke to staff from across a range of social work teams who refer young people to the FFF service. Families invited to take part in interviews were those who had worked with FFF either through outreach or placement. Participants received study information sheets, and written or recorded consent was obtained. For young people under 16 a parent or carer was asked to provide consent in addition to the young person's own assent to participate. A comprehensive overview of the sample recruitment and selection criteria is presented in the pilot protocol (Sanders et al, 2019).

### Data management and processing

Interviews and focus groups followed semi-structured topic guides, and were audio recorded. Recordings were transcribed and pseudonymised prior to analysis using NVivo 12. The survey was distributed using Qualtrics.

### Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, observations and open text survey questions were analysed using Thematic Analysis. We followed a mixed deductive-inductive and iterative approach - initially developing the codebook based on the overarching research questions, however allowing for inductive development of codes based on the data collected. Thematic Analysis involved labelling data with descriptive codes and developing themes which describe patterns across the data to answer the pre-specified research questions. We looked for patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies across different informants and time points to

<sup>5</sup> One did not specify Portfolio



help us answer the research questions. To enhance trustworthiness of the qualitative findings we triangulated across different respondents and with different methods of data collection. We followed a transparent approach to analysis and reporting as set out in our protocol (Sanders et al., 2019). Interpretation of findings considered contrasting and inconsistent accounts, and consideration of contextual factors.

Quantitative survey and administrative data were analysed descriptively, to present characteristics of delivery and acceptability

(how the model is received by staff and families). The number of respondents for each survey question varies due to some missed questions or incomplete surveys. The results were triangulated together with the qualitative findings, looking for consistencies and inconsistencies between the different data sources. Survey and administrative data are presented in tables in Appendix A, and summarised in the next section. A revised logic model is presented in Appendix D based on the findings of this pilot evaluation.





# FINDINGS

Findings for each of the research questions are presented below. For each sub-question (i.e. 1a - 3c as set out in the methods section above), we first present a summary of findings for that research question. This summary is followed by more detailed findings for each indicator we set out to measure for that question. These indicators, including any specified thresholds, were set out in our pilot protocol (Sanders et al., 2019).

## Evidence of Feasibility

**Was the intervention implemented as intended (i.e. as set out in the logic model) and in what way does implementation vary (if at all)?**

### Summary of Findings

In its first three months after September 2020 when the service opened, Middlesbrough's FFF service supported 44 young people through outreach, and seven young people in NWD placements. The average age of young people who were currently being supported (in December 2020) was 14, and the majority of these young people being supported by the service were looked after (57%). The service was well staffed, with only two vacancies remaining out of 30 posts three months after the launch. These vacancies were resource worker roles, and all specialist roles had been filled. The range of intended placement options was also available.

As intended by the NWD model, young people worked with the same assigned key worker throughout the time they were

being supported, and young people's cases were reviewed at least monthly. Creative and flexible support offered by the service included tailoring support to individual's needs, and flexibility in placement length where needed. The proportion of FFF staff who had completed restorative practice training was slightly below the expected 80% (68% at the time of the launch and 74% three months later), although solution focused training had been delivered to 80% and 90% of staff respectively.

Due to COVID-19 some training, staff meetings and work with families had taken place virtually during the evaluation period, and local adaptations had been made to the NWD Provocations and Non-Negotiables. We identified a number of ways in which practice was consistent with North Yorkshire County Council's NWD Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations. Some challenges with these included finding a suitable foster care placement for one young person, or involving all appropriate professionals in multi-agency RAISE (Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation) meetings.

### Indicators

**How many young people has the service worked with, and what are their characteristics?**

Table 2 in Appendix A, and Figure 1 below, shows that when Middlesbrough's FFF service opened in September 2020, there were 14 young people being supported by outreach and no young people in NWD placements. In December 2020, three



Figure 1: Young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service

### Young people being supported by No Wrong Door

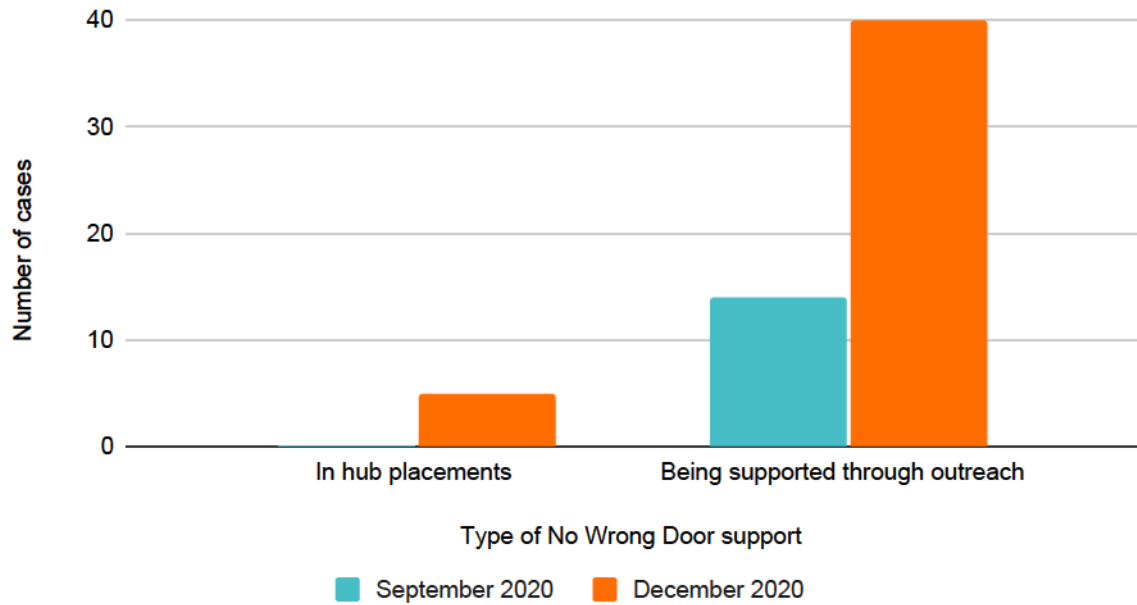
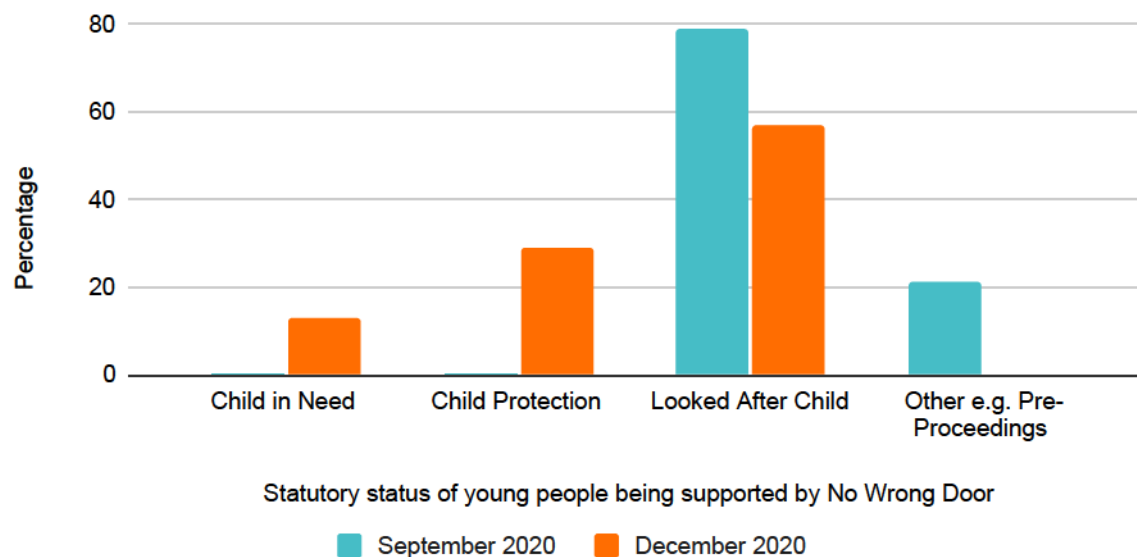


Figure 2: Statutory status of young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service

### Statutory status of young people being supported by No Wrong Door





months after the service opened, there were 40 young people being supported by outreach and five young people in NWD placements (three full time and two respite).

The average age of young people at both time points was 14 (range 11-17). In September 2020, 50% of young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service were male, and 86% of young people were White British. By December 2020, 58% of young people were male and 84% of young people were White British. Young people who were being supported by FFF and were not White British were recorded as being 'Asian / Asian British', 'Black / Black British', 'Gypsy / Roma', 'Mixed' or 'Other Ethnic Group'.

Table 2 in Appendix A, and Figure 2 below show that the majority of young people being supported by the service were Looked After (79% in September 2020 and 57% by December 2020). In September 2020, the young people who were not Looked After did not have Child in Need or Child Protection Plans in place (for example they were in pre-proceedings). By December

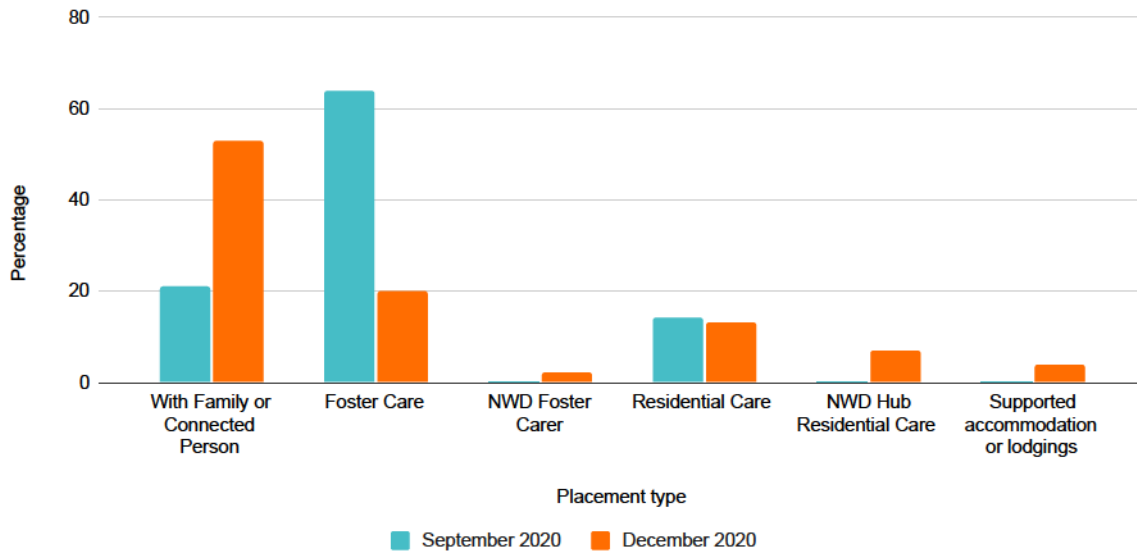
2020, of the young people who were not Looked After, 13% were Child in Need and 28% were Child Protection.

The NWD model provides support to young people through NWD placements, but also provides outreach support to young people living with their families or who are in non-NWD foster care or residential placements. In September 2020 when the service first opened, the majority of young people being supported by FFF were in foster care (64%). A further 21% were living with family or a connected person, and 14% were placed in residential care. By December 2020, the majority of young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service (53%) were living with family or a connected person. A further 22% were living in foster care (of which 2% were in NWD foster care and the rest were in non-NWD placements), 20% were in residential care, (of which 7% in NWD residential care and the rest were in non-NWD placements), and 4% were in supported accommodation or supported lodgings.



Figure 3: Placement type of young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service

Placement type of young people being supported by No Wrong Door



By December, 24% of young people being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service had received support from the police liaison officer, 22% had received support from the communication support worker, and 16% had received support from the life coach.

**Do young people enter the service quickly and leave slowly?**

Young people being supported by FFF in December 2020 had waited an average of 23 days between referral and receiving support from FFF, and an average of 16 days between being allocated to FFF and receiving support from the service.

The average number of days FFF had been involved with the six young people whose cases had closed was 78 days (ranging from 11 to 179). This was longer than the period that Middlesbrough's FFF hub was open for, because some young people were

supported through outreach before the hub opened its doors.

Were all young people supported by the same assigned key worker throughout the time they were working with FFF (i.e. number of changes in key worker)?

According to administrative data in December 2020, no young people either being supported by Middlesbrough's FFF service at the time, or who had been supported by and subsequently closed had had any changes in their key worker. All staff surveyed also agreed or strongly agreed that young people are supported by a consistent key worker.

**Were young people's cases reviewed monthly?**

It was reported in the administrative data that the six young people who had been supported by and subsequently closed to



Middlesbrough's FFF service by December 2020 had their cases reviewed weekly whilst they were being supported by the service. Middlesbrough report that case reviews are completed a minimum of once a month, either by the key worker or during the group supervision.

The survey in May 2021 found that resource workers and senior resource workers who responded reported that the cases of the young people they worked with were reviewed monthly, while specialist roles reported that the cases of the young people they worked with were reviewed weekly.

Was Middlesbrough's FFF service team structured as intended, with intended placement options available and 80% of posts filled?

### **Placements available**

When the service launched in September 2020 there were six NWD/ FFF residential care placements available. These were four short-stay and two emergency bed placements. A supported accommodation worker was also in post. By December 2020, there was also one NWD/ FFF foster carer placement available, which is referred to as a hub community family within the model

Please note: We assume that the supported accommodation worker, referred to above, in post in September 2020, also had the role of FFF foster carer / hub community family. A later interview informed that the FFF foster carer/ hub community family could provide both foster care and supported lodgings to young people through the FFF service.

### **Recruitment of NWD staff**

There were no substantial issues reported with recruitment of NWD staff. Findings (Figure 4) showed that the service was well

staffed in September 2020 when it opened, with 25 of 30 posts (83%) filled (vacant posts were the police analyst, one of seven senior resource worker posts, the casual resource worker (foster carer), as well as the housekeeper and domestic posts). By December 2020, three months after the launch, only two vacancies (of 30 posts) remained, which were a senior resource worker and a casual resource worker (foster carer) post, also known as a hub community family.

The three Middlesbrough manager positions, described below, will be employed by North Yorkshire until the SFPC project end date for Middlesbrough, afterwards moving to be employed by Middlesbrough. This is under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) arrangement. North Yorkshire provided inductions as well as both formal and informal supervision to the three management positions and led the recruitment of these posts.

A brief description of Middlesbrough's FFF staff roles are below:

- One FFF service manager oversees the service. This role includes facilitating deep dive meetings and team meetings. There are also two deputy operations managers - an edge of care manager overseeing outreach work and a hub manager overseeing the support for young people who are placed at the hub. These roles are currently North Yorkshire County Council posts.
- Resource workers undertake both outreach and work with young people in NWD placements, and can be assigned as key workers for young people. Casual resource workers also support with work in the hub. Some of the casual resource workers also offer placements as foster carers or supported lodgings.



Figure 4: Recruitment by NWD launch date (September 2020)

Recruitment by No Wrong Door launch (Sept 2020)



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES, PROTECTING CHILDREN: NO WRONG DOOR | PILOT EVALUATION REPORT MIDDLESBROUGH

- Senior resource workers hold roles as portfolio leads, overseeing specific areas such as risk management, health and activities, education, and parenting.
- The multidisciplinary team also includes a life coach (clinical psychologist), communication support worker (speech and language therapist), police liaison officer who works with young people, and a police analyst whose role involves information sharing between the police and FFF. A performance and intelligence analyst is also in place who monitors the performance of Middlesbrough's FFF service. Housekeeper and domestic roles also support the functioning of the service.
- A specialist FFF foster carer (also known as a hub community family within the model) cares for up to two young people aged 14+ at a time. This is through fostering or by providing supported lodgings, usually for three months only. During this time, the specialist foster carer and the team at FFF works with the young person and their family to support the young person in their next steps to a permanent placement. This staff member is also intended to be available to work as a casual resource worker in the hub.





### General support and recruitment

North Yorkshire County Council provided Middlesbrough with intensive on-going support pre and post commencement of the NWD model. This spans general support with inducting FFF staff, for example, shadowing at one of the North Yorkshire County Council NWD Hubs. North Yorkshire County Council have also shared relevant materials for policies and procedures. North Yorkshire County Council led the recruitment of management posts and supported the recruitment of senior residential posts (portfolio leads) and other staff positions in Middlesbrough. North Yorkshire County Council provides both formal and informal supervision to the three management posts (whilst these remain North Yorkshire County Council posts).

### Stakeholder mapping and support

North Yorkshire County Council supported Middlesbrough with mapping out key internal and external stakeholders who would benefit from knowing about the FFF service in Middlesbrough, and delivered presentations to these teams.

### Communities of Practice

North Yorkshire County Council founded and facilitated Communities of Practice (COP) as a learning and support network, chaired by North Yorkshire County Council, for each NWD role. The COP were not operational initially when Middlesbrough went live with the NWD model, in September 2020, rather they were developed when the following three LAs participating in the wider trial (between April - June 2021) had also gone live.

Were 80% of staff working in Middlesbrough's FFF service trained in a restorative, strengths-based approach?

### Training received

Required training varied depending on staff role. This included training in the NWD model, restorative practice and training in solution focused intervention. Staff also received training in a range of more specific topics including attachment theory, mental health awareness, trauma impact and recovery and parental conflict. The full list of required training is available in Appendix B.

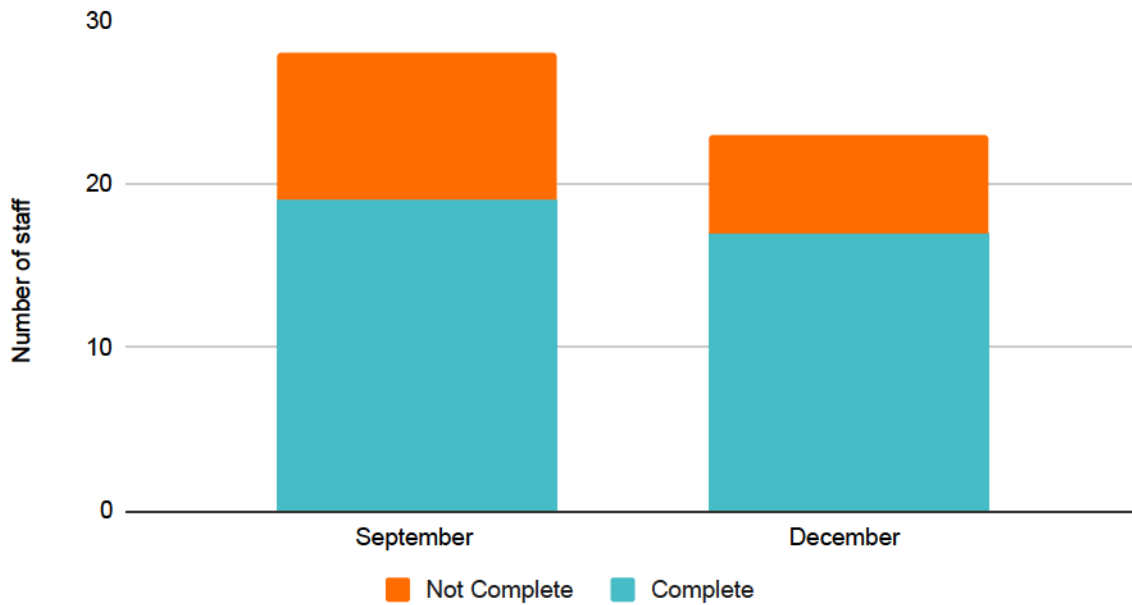
Figure 5 shows that in September 2020, when the service first opened, administrative data indicated that 68% of required staff (19 of 28 for whom it was required) had completed restorative practice training. 80% of staff (20 of 25 required staff) had completed solution focused training. The NWD module had been completed by 12 FFF staff by this point.

By December, administrative data indicated that 74% of staff (17 of 23 required staff) had completed restorative practice training, and 90% of staff (18 of 20 required staff) had completed solution focus training. The NWD training had been completed by 70% of staff (16 of 23 required staff). The difference in staff figures between the two time points is due to staff turnover.



Figure 5: Restorative practice training completed by required staff

### Restorative Practice training completed by required staff



#### FFF staff experiences of the training received

Staff shared positive views about the training and reported that it was well delivered and informative.

Staff who had joined the service later reported they did not receive the same induction training in restorative practice, although staff at North Yorkshire reported an agile and flexible offer of continued support and training in restorative practice and other key areas is intended to be provided to those who join the service at a later date. One staff member noted that they still had a lot to learn about working in children’s social care, suggesting there may be additional training needs for staff members who are or have been employed outside of the children’s social care context.

#### Were there adaptations to any components of the model, and what were these?

##### Working remotely

The meetings we observed at follow-up were all virtual meetings, or hybrid meetings with some staff attending in person and some joining remotely. This was due to practical constraints whereby researchers were only able to attend meetings that involved the option to join virtually. This suggests that some meetings taking place in the service, but not necessarily all meetings, included staff joining virtually.

##### Local adaptations

One senior leader reported that initially there was a rigid adherence to the North Yorkshire County Council NWD model, however in time this became more flexible and some local adaptations were made. Some of the Non-Negotiables



and Provocations, as well as paperwork and processes, were locally tailored in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council to fit with the local context and priorities in Middlesbrough.

The age range eligible for the service was also adapted in Middlesbrough to 11-18, slightly different to the 12-25 age range in North Yorkshire where the model was developed.

### **What creative or flexible use of support was offered?**

Follow-up interviews identified that there was some flexibility in the length of time young people could stay with the specialist foster carer/ hub community family, depending on need and availability of alternative placements.

Follow-up focus groups and interviews identified that support provided for young people was flexible and tailored to individuals' needs, with staff able to be creative. For example, support might just be for the young person, or for the whole family, or it might be separate initially and then joint later on. Other tailored support included staff regularly taking young people out to do activities together, or offering personalised, practical support, for example: helping a young person struggling with personal hygiene.

*"It's about looking at our role and using our skills to meet the needs of the young people the best way that we can do it." [FFF staff member, follow-up focus group]*

### **Is the model consistently implemented in line with Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations?**

Practice within the NWD model is informed by a set of ten Distinguishers, eight Non-Negotiables and four Provocations. These are a set of principles and core values informing practice which promote a core offer of flexible and creative support, high aspirations for young people, and promoting permanence for young people within their families or family based placements. When introducing their FFF service, Middlesbrough used North Yorkshire County Council's NWD Distinguishers, but developed locally tailored Provocations and Non-Negotiables in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council to align with local context and priorities in Middlesbrough. The North Yorkshire County Council NWD Distinguishers, Non-Negotiables and Provocations, as well as Middlesbrough's locally tailored Provocations and Non-Negotiables are available in Appendix C.

The section below summarises in more detail where we observed practice that was and was not consistent with these principles.

### **Training and support for staff**

Consistent with the NWD Distinguisher 'robust training strategy', staff reported having received a comprehensive training package to support delivery of the NWD model, and regular development days and opportunities to reflect on training.

Consistent with the NWD Non-Negotiable, 'a commitment and investment in staff support and being rigorous about holding them to account (high support, high challenge)', staff reported that the FFF service manager regularly took the team through the Non-Negotiables and Provocations in team meetings to support adherence to these principles.



### Partnership working and multi-agency approach to risk

In line with the NWD Distinguisher 'close partnership working', the meetings we observed were all multi-professional meetings between multidisciplinary FFF staff or with multi-agency partners including social workers and representatives from education and health (such as teachers or the school nurse). FFF staff in focus groups highlighted the benefits of having the life coach (clinical psychologist) and the communication support worker (speech and language therapist) within the service. For example, this enabled staff to receive advice and guidance and families to receive direct work from these professionals. Further, having these roles in-house overcame waiting lists in external services. FFF staff also worked closely with children's social care staff as well as external partners such as schools.

Consistent with the NWD Distinguisher 'multi-agency intelligence led approach to reduce risk', in focus groups staff reported that having the expertise of the police analyst to inform a children's social care approach to frequent missing episodes was beneficial. The RAISE meetings we observed provided opportunities for direct discussion and information sharing between agencies in order to identify and respond to risks. However, it was noted in a couple of instances that it could be challenging to get attendance from all involved professionals.

*"So for example, they've done brilliant RAISE meetings and now they're not so brilliant because some of the partners aren't getting round the table. So some have even been cancelled, postponed I would say rather than cancelled. So there's just a bit of sharpness that has to come back."*

*[Senior leader, follow-up interview]*

### Stable, local, family based placements

Consistent with the NWD Distinguisher 'always progressing to permanence within a family or community', we observed discussions about achieving stable long term placements for young people. We also noted practice consistent with the NWD Non-Negotiable 'residential care as a short term intervention not long term solution'. This included using NWD placements to offer respite or short term placements, and supporting young people to return home or to foster care placements where they then receive outreach support.

In some instances young people were moved from out of authority placements into NWD placements, which is in line with the NWD Non-Negotiable 'commitment to do whatever it takes to support young people within their community (no out of area placements)'.

However, in one observation staff discussed whether or not a young person was safe to stay in the local authority, and in another instance staff discussed a young person remaining in a current residential care placement where no suitable foster care placement was available. Although this was also not in line with the Non-Negotiable 'residential care as a short term intervention not long term solution', it was in line with the wishes of the young person. This suggests for local authorities new to the model, where there is inconsistency between the different NWD principles, some can end up being prioritised over others.

*"[Young person] is doing very well at the care home. He verbally tells everyone at the care home how much he likes it there."*  
*[Follow-up observation]*



North Yorkshire recommends that a hierarchy should be avoided, and all principles should work alongside each other to get the best outcomes, meaning that where one is not met, there should be efforts made to achieve it.

### High standards and aspirations for young people

Examples of the NWD Non-Negotiable, 'forward looking and aspirational' as well as the Provocations 'what kind of adult do we want them to be at 25, 35, 50?' included staff encouraging and supporting young people's education attendance and achievement.

In line with the NWD Distinguisher, 'young people's aspirations drive practice,' staff reported listening to the voice and aspirations of the young person to drive practice.

*"As far as aspirations, as I said, one of the young people isn't happy in education. I'm going to go down there and make sure she is, and we talk about their aspirations all the time and career advice and where their future is."*  
[Senior leader, follow-up interview]

Consistent with the NWD Non-Negotiable 'high standards and ambitions for all young people' and the Provocation 'would this be good enough for my child?' staff reported thinking about what they would want for their own children, and supporting social workers to be more outcome focused in their referrals.

### Key worker consistency

Consistent with the NWD Distinguisher 'high stickability of the key worker,' young people and parents reported that there was consistency in their key workers. However, it was also mentioned by some respondents

that in some instances this consistency had been affected by staff turnover or staff not always being available for young people or social workers to reach, for example, on their days off.

*"The key worker said I'm here for you, I'm going to support you. You're moving to [foster carer] and then moving from here, and then she moved on from her job, which was quite a let-down for the young person."*  
[Foster carer, follow-up interview]

We also observed discussions about ensuring not too many professionals were involved with a young person, and about how to introduce specialist involvement in a way that it would be well received by the young person, consistent with the NWD Distinguisher 'fewer referrals, less stigma'

"Staff Member 1: [Young person] has a very negative perception of professionals so not sure if seeing another will be beneficial especially if he thinks he does not need a speech and language therapist.

Staff Member 2: But it's how you present it to him. Present the speech and language therapist to him in a way that he can relate to." [Follow-up observation]

### Enter quickly and leave slowly

In line with the NWD Non-Negotiable 'bring young people into NWD quickly, but move them out slowly,' staff in focus groups described instances where Middlesbrough's FFF service was being used to respond to crises, and that it offered support for young people for however long they need it. However, inconsistent with this, one social worker in a focus group also mentioned an instance where a young person's case was closed abruptly when the care plan



changed, and another mentioned that when young people were in crisis their cases weren't always opened sufficiently quickly by the service, suggesting that it was hard to meet this criteria in all instances.

*“Like I say, when you’re in that crisis situation and fighting fires left, right and centre and just trying everything to get support in place, it can feel like a little bit of a battle to get the referral and get the referral accepted.”*  
[Social worker, follow-up focus group]

What are the contextual barriers and facilitators for delivery of the intervention, and are these accurately captured in the logic model?

### Summary of Findings

The number of children looked after in Middlesbrough before introducing the NWD model was high, including high use of out of area placements. The Ofsted judgement of ‘inadequate’ was seen by some as having created the conditions to allow something new to come in, and staff being ready for a change.

Most staff reported feeling confident using the model and staff reported having sufficient time to take advantage of the model. Despite this, staff reported difficulties at times managing the intense nature of the work and competing demands within the service including balancing support for young people in NWD placements with outreach work. Consistent with the logic model, having opportunities to bond as a team and regular reminders of the Provocations and Non-Negotiables were reported at follow-up to be factors which helped practice.

Most staff reported sufficient buy-in from leadership, and reported influences of NWD on wider practice, including the spreading of the Provocations, Non-Negotiables, and use of deep dives, into the wider children’s social care context.

Consistent with the logic model, good links with social work teams were reported to be helpful. However, the somewhat independent nature of Middlesbrough’s FFF service (from children’s social care) was also thought to be helpful in facilitating engagement with families. Linked to this, clarity over referral criteria and differentiating between outreach services in Middlesbrough was another challenge identified by staff we spoke to at follow-up.

### Indicators

#### What are the vacancy, staff turnover rate and caseloads?

The vacancy rate was 17% when the NWD model launched in Middlesbrough in September 2020 (5 of 30 posts vacant), dropping to 7% (2 of 30 posts vacant) by December 2020.

The average caseload for the 15 key workers in post in September 2020 was 1.07 (with a range of one to two young people per key worker). These were all young people being supported by outreach as no young people had yet been placed in a NWD placement. By December 2020, the average caseload for the 16 key workers in post was 2.93 (with a range of one to five young people per key worker).

#### Do 70% of staff surveyed perceive there is sufficient buy in and support from leadership?

According to the survey, 15 of 16 respondents (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was sufficient buy-in from leadership for the NWD model.



## What is the pre-existing practice model and culture around decision making, risk, residential care and permanence?

### Workforce context before No Wrong Door

Staff reported some workforce instability in children's social care prior to the NWD model being introduced in Middlesbrough through recent changes in leadership. However, this was reported to have become more stable over time. Staff reported that the vision and values communicated by leadership were that child outcomes were central, and there was an emphasis on good quality, creative, and preventative practice.

Prior to introducing the NWD model in Middlesbrough, most staff in children's services that we spoke to reported feeling supported and that there was regular training available to support practice. Some staff reported uncertainty after the 'inadequate' Ofsted rating, and workload pressures and workforce instability sometimes affected staff training uptake, or the amount of support assistants and team managers were able to provide.

Instability for some children and young people where social workers left, were sick, or where there were transitions between teams was perceived to affect relationship building between the young person and their social worker.

### Pre-existing culture around decision-making

At baseline, staff shared that management and legal representatives supported social worker decision making through panels. This process was thought to help share accountability, however some social workers reported wanting more involvement in this decision making process.

*"We're the ones' doing the work with the family and know what's going on. So I was told I'm not allowed to go on the panel about my case. My manager went for me. I don't agree with that."  
[Social worker, baseline focus group].*

Family members interviewed also described experiencing delays in decision-making from children's social care in the past, for example where social workers needed to speak with their managers first.

### Pre-existing support for children in care or on the edge of care

One of the key aims of the NWD model is to keep young people within the local authority rather than place them externally. The number of children looked after in out of area placements in Middlesbrough before the NWD model was introduced was high. However, given the size of the local authority, some out of area placements were still perceived to be close by geographically. For example, an out of area placement in a neighbouring town could be just two or three miles from Middlesbrough's FFF hub. On the other hand, if needed, a placement could be over 80 miles away from the North Yorkshire hub and still be within the local authority, although North Yorkshire highlight that the focus of the NWD model is to maintain young people within their family or community, which would take precedence against moving them further distances within a larger authority. High numbers of children looked after in out of area placements in Middlesbrough before the NWD model was introduced was in part attributed to limited availability of in-house foster care placements suitable for teenagers relative to the number of children and young people needing placements.



Before the NWD model was introduced, the Family Group Conference Team offered support with care plan changes or reunification. An Interventions Team offered short term and bespoke support to parents, children and young people to prevent family breakdown or support return home. Staff noted however that this service had limited capacity and a waiting list.

Placement stability was generally reported to be good before the NWD model was introduced in Middlesbrough. Foster carers and residential workers reported positive experiences of flexible and tailored multi-agency support for children and young people, through services such as education, the virtual school, and CAMHS. Staff in children's social care also reported positive relationships with multi-agency partners and voluntary sector organisations such as Barnardo's, who offered support for children and young people. Middlesbrough also had a newly commissioned Mental Health Practitioner for the Leaving Care Service.

However, some staff noted a lack of readily available multi-agency support, and that services that were available were over-stretched at times. Specialist, creative and meaningful long term support for adolescents in particular, including preventative support, was reported to be limited.

#### **Is (pre-existing) practice relational and restorative?**

At baseline, social workers and residential workers reported having been trained in relational or restorative approaches in the past, including restorative practice or Strengthening Practice. Family Group Conference was another element of practice being used before the NWD model was introduced that was restorative.

Staff in children's social care, including residential workers, also described receiving training in Signs of Safety before the NWD model was introduced.

#### **Do staff feel prepared and supported by the information, training and support provided, and are they motivated and confident to deliver the model?**

It was noted in follow-up focus groups that FFF staff had developed lots of new skills, and that the NWD model was well embedded in their practice. According to the survey, 14 of 16 respondents (88%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident using the NWD model.

The survey found that 8 of 12 staff (75%) working directly with young people agreed or strongly agreed that they had enough time for direct work with the young people they worked with. However, only 7 of 11 staff (63%) of those who said it applied to their role agreed or strongly agreed that they had enough time for direct work with the parents or carers allocated to them. Further, only 9 of 16 respondents (56%) felt that they had enough time to take full advantage of the NWD model.

#### **What is the level of understanding of, engagement with and support for the model from senior leadership, partners (such as police and health) and teams making hub referrals?**

There appeared to be a high level of support for the NWD model from senior management and leadership in Middlesbrough, and good relationships and communication between the FFF service manager and the heads of services and senior leadership in children's social care.





Some staff reported challenges for social workers differentiating between the different outreach services available in Middlesbrough, including FFF, and which service to refer to in different situations. This was thought to be influenced in part by staff turnover in social work teams, although an e-learning module was available for new staff to introduce the model.

Efforts were in place to align the NWD model and the children's social care practice model, and staff reported some use of the Non-Negotiables and Provocations, as well as the NWD deep dive approach in children's social care teams.

*"...we've been able to use that deep dive approach to do deep dive audits of children in the wider service, using the skills and experience, and using the kind of questioning and language that comes with the Non-Negotiables and the Provocations. Which has been really helpful in terms of helping staff understand children's journeys..." – [Senior leader, follow-up interview]*

Middlesbrough's FFF service was reported to be working closely with education partners. Staff in follow-up focus groups also noted that the FFF service was becoming increasingly well known among multi-agency partners, such as police and youth offending services, and that this was facilitated with partnership boards. Multi-agency partners were also reported to be engaging in deep dives which enabled good reflective discussions.

**What are the reasons for any adaptations to delivery, perceptions of facilitators to successful delivery, and barriers and challenges faced or overcome?**

As well as the effects of COVID-19, other barriers and challenges faced included clarity over referral criteria for Middlesbrough's FFF service, difficulty recruiting FFF foster carers, the intense nature of FFF and competing demands, and compatibility between young people placed. Supporting integration of the multidisciplinary team and their delivery of the NWD model was a facilitator to model success. Being a service that was not delivered by social workers was felt to be beneficial, but maintaining relationships with social workers was still considered important. More detail on each of these factors is presented below.

### **COVID-19**

It was noted that Covid had delayed implementation and affected how quickly the service could start taking referrals or working with young people who had been referred. Starting a new role during a pandemic was also raised as a challenge. Some social workers reported instances where it was difficult for staff to work face to face with young people and families due to COVID-19, or where parents or carers were not engaged with accessing the support available.

### **Clarity over referral criteria for Middlesbrough's FFF service**

A key challenge for Middlesbrough's FFF service was ensuring the right referrals from social workers. Further, some FFF staff expressed that some of the young people who are placed in NWD placements did not necessarily fit with the NWD model, although their responses suggested some uncertainty about what were the right cases for NWD.



*“...we seem to be getting residential cases in emergencies for extended periods of time that would normally not be a part of NWD due to not meeting the criteria.”  
[FFF staff member, follow-up]*

Ensuring the referral form requests appropriate detail about why the service is needed, and having phone conversations with social workers about referrals helped facilitate the appropriateness and quality of referrals made to the FFF service.

### **Difficulty recruiting NWD foster carers**

Another reported challenge has been the recruitment of FFF foster carers, also known as hub community families. Possible reasons suggested for this included the COVID-19 pandemic, an unclear marketing strategy, and foster carers not knowing fully what the (NWD/FFF) role will entail. Further, other possible reasons include potential uncertainty around who the foster carers will be caring for and the level of need, as well as local conditions within the local authority.

### **Intense nature of Middlesbrough's FFF service and competing demands**

The capacity of the service relative to the high level of need in Middlesbrough was seen by staff as a potential challenge. Some staff reported that there have been waiting lists to receive support from FFF, with a need to prioritise who needs to receive support first using a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) rating system. Some staff reported feeling that additional NWD hubs would be beneficial to meet this need.

Competing demands between outreach and the residential side of the NWD model were also noted by some FFF staff, senior leaders and referring social workers. The

time-intensive work to support high-need young people, including missing episodes and incidents going into the night, was also perceived to cause pressure and stress to staff at times.

*“I'm aware of one situation where, because of the young person that they had [in] residency in the hub at that time. Another young person couldn't get as much outreach support as they might have done because of the demands of caring for that young person who was in the hub.”  
[Senior leader, follow-up interview]*

A factor, thought to be useful in the FFF staff recruitment process, and a potential mitigation for this challenge in delivering the NWD model, was that the service manager for FFF was allowed to over-recruit to staff positions.

### **Compatibility between young people placed**

Compatibility between young people within the hub, and suitability of the available FFF foster care placements was a challenge in some instances. One occasion was described where there was incompatibility with a young person placed in the care of the FFF foster carer, with a subsequent disruption to that placement. The high needs of some young people placed in NWD placements was also reported to be unsettling at times for other young people already in residential FFF placements.

### **Supporting multidisciplinary practice**

The opportunity to bond as a team, for example through regular check-ins and staff coming together for development days, was seen as a way to support practice. However building relationships was reported to have been a challenge under COVID-19,



particularly for multidisciplinary staff from backgrounds outside of children's social care. However, once staff could work in person from the hub again, this was reported to be improving and staff were beginning to get a better understanding of each other's roles.

Other enabling factors to support practice included a flexible and responsive approach to training, having the opportunity to implement skills in practice, and having regular reminders of the Provocations and Non-Negotiables in supervisions as well as team meetings.

Shared learning between the FFF deputy managers (i.e. the hub and outreach manager) was also felt to be important because their roles are supposed to interlink, each overseeing half of the service's offer. So far, opportunities for this were felt to have been limited.

### **Links between NWD and social workers**

Staff in follow-up focus groups reported that the FFF service being delivered by staff who are not social workers was beneficial. However, it was also reported that it was useful to be working closely with social workers, to ensure referrals made were appropriate and that the NWD intervention was aligned with social work practice.

In what ways are young people's characteristics and area characteristics perceived to affect delivery and outcomes?

### **NWD as part of an improvement journey**

At baseline, staff identified high levels of need in the local area, and noted challenges of introducing a new model in the context of the Ofsted judgement of inadequate. However, at follow-up some staff felt that their inadequate Ofsted rating

and implementing NWD as part of their improvement journey actually created the conditions for staff to be ready for something new, and so the model landed well. One staff member commented that given the unique circumstances, that other areas may not yield the same results when implementing NWD.

"I really think it's great, but I don't think that you could carbon copy what we've got in Middlesbrough and have the same results. I think we just needed it so bad at that time, which is why it's landed well, it's working well, it's had really good results." – [Senior leader, follow-up interview]

Senior staff at follow-up also reported there's been a lot of change in terms of management in children's social care in addition to changes to the principal social worker. It was also noted that recent changes in senior leadership, and a recently commissioned social work team to support permanence may also have contributed to outcomes for children and young people in Middlesbrough.

### **Local authority size**

Some staff noted that Middlesbrough was a small local authority. While in a larger local authority, such as North Yorkshire, a young person could be moved to a new placement sufficiently far from an area where they were at risk and remain within the country, that was harder to do in Middlesbrough.

### **Young people's characteristics**

Some staff in follow-up focus groups reported feeling that young people's cases which were considered to be of higher urgency or complexity were prioritised at times. For example, support for young people on the edge of care, was felt by social workers to be prioritised at times over



supporting young people already in care, given the time-sensitivity of preventing entry to care.

*“We come from a position where our children are already in care, and you are coming from a position where they’re on the edge of care and in crisis at home. So actually they’re more at risk”  
[Social worker, follow-up focus group].*

In contrast, other social workers noted that it could be hard at times for FFF staff to make time for outreach work when they were working intensively with young people placed in the hub who had high needs. It was also noted by some social workers in a follow-up focus group that the compatibility of young people in the hub was an important consideration for whether or not certain young people could be placed there.

A couple of staff in follow-up focus groups noted that preventative support not currently offered could benefit young people below the age group currently served by Middlesbrough’s FFF service.

#### **What sustainability planning is in place?**

The key component of sustainability planning which was identified in the follow-up focus group held with heads of service, was the steps being taken to align the children’s social care practice model, policies and guidance with the NWD approach. Senior leaders reported plans to refine the development plan and practice framework as part of the ongoing improvement journey. This was expected to facilitate a clear and consistent approach across children’s services.

Senior leaders reported that although there are no firm plans yet in terms of financing Middlesbrough’s FFF service in the future, there is a strong commitment to continuing the project, and they are in the process of budget planning for the next three years and looking into how they mainstream the project and offer it to a broader cohort. It was noted that reducing spend on external residential placements was a key factor expected to support sustainability of the NWD model, and that increasing the capacity and reach of the FFF service was under consideration.

#### **Is the intervention acceptable to (well received by) key stakeholders including senior leaders, staff and practitioners working directly with children and families, and families?**

#### **Summary of Findings**

At follow-up, most FFF staff reported feeling positive about their experience so far and satisfied with the training and information provided. Some family members shared that they had strong relationships with FFF staff and reported experiencing intensive and responsive support from Middlesbrough’s FFF service. FFF staff were reported to work hard to build relationships with families, and being able to take young people out on activities appears to be a key part of relationship building. FFF staff feel they have had a positive response from families. Family members described support from FFF as addressing needs which have been left unmet for years. However, parents expressed that they would have preferred the support earlier, rather than it taking a major incident to happen before receiving it. Some staff reported that the model may be further improved by reviewing the criteria for hub placements and also the duration of placement with the NWD foster carers.



## Indicators

### Is the model well received by 70% of staff?

According to the follow-up survey with FFF staff, 13 of 16 respondents (81%) reported that their experience so far had been positive or very positive, and 100% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the information and training provided in relation to NWD.

The FFF team was also generally well regarded by wider staff outside the service, including social workers. Although social workers commented on challenges maintaining the pace of the outreach work and ensuring stability within the team, they also shared experiences of some positive work completed by the service.

### Are 70% of staff satisfied in their jobs and intend to remain in their roles?

According to the survey, 13 of 16 respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt satisfied in their job, and 15 of 16 respondents (94%) reported that they were likely or very likely to stay in the FFF team for the next 12 months.

### Family views (acceptability) of the model, their experience of the support provided, and how well staff built relationships with young people

Families reported experiencing intensive and responsive support from the FFF service. Families reported that the support provided by key workers was consistent, timely and responsive to their needs.

*“She’s fantastic [key worker] and like sometimes my own social worker, she was in and out and sometimes I needed her to be down sorting things in my house and she wouldn’t come. [Key worker] would come.”  
[Parent, follow-up interview]*

This support was described as addressing needs which have been left unmet for years, such as enabling timely access to therapeutic support, for example. Some parents described how they had been wanting support sooner, how parents should be listened to earlier on, and how it took major incidents for their families to receive support.

The families we spoke with spoke positively about their relationships with the life coach, key workers, and the communication support worker. One FFF staff member also shared that the NWD approach allows them to develop meaningful relationships with children and families.

Parents reported feeling that their children have developed positive relationships with staff at FFF. This was considered important where young people had previously had a lack of trust in adults.

*“Well [young person] can talk to her so there must be something there because [young person] doesn’t talk to anybody. [Young person] tells [key worker] more things than [young person] actually tells me.” -  
[Parent, follow-up interview]*

These experiences were in contrast to reports from some parents and young people we spoke with who had experienced instances of instability or inconsistent communication from social workers in the past. It was noted by a FFF staff



member, in a follow-up focus group, that the independent nature of the FFF service, perceived as being separate from children's social care, is something that has helped to facilitate families' engagement.

However, discussions amongst staff in follow-up focus groups, and in meetings we observed, indicated that there had been mixed experiences of relationship building. Some young people were reported to take longer to build those relationships with FFF staff, and in some instances issues such as staff changes or disruption to regular visits due to factors such as COVID-19 were felt to be barriers to engagement from certain young people.

*“He engaged well with the outreach worker at the initial visit. Was really keen, and again I think there was a gap in revisiting that young person. Again you know, a three week gap, so he lost interest.”*  
[Social worker, follow-up focus group]

## 2. Evidence of promise

Is there evidence to support the intervention theory of change as set out in the logic model, including the mechanisms by which change is achieved and the facilitators and barriers to change?

### Summary of Findings

Observations, focus groups and interviews identified examples of staff working restoratively with young people and families. This involved building trusting relationships, making decisions together with family members and reflecting the young person's voice in decision making and practice. Staff also used strengths-based and reflective practice. However, there was also some evidence of continued use of elements of

Signs of Safety, as well as confusion over whether Signs of Safety should still be used. This suggests the importance of clear guidance on integrating NWD with existing or previous practice models.

Support for young people and families included a range of placements and support in the hub, as well as outreach. Young people and parents were supported by key workers with daily routines, addressing risk and for issues such as education or parenting. Support was also flexible and available out of hours where needed, and included the multidisciplinary staff team as well as other services such as the Virtual School. The majority of staff (63%) reported that young people engaged with the development of their NWD/FFF plan, although not all young people we spoke to were clear about their plan or goals. Processes for risk management included intelligence provided by the police analyst role, and the use of multidisciplinary RAISE (Risk, Analysis, Intervention, Solution, Evaluation) meetings. Information sharing within the FFF service, with social workers and with partner agencies was generally reported to be good.

### Indicators

**How are restorative and strengths-based approaches used in practice?**

#### Restorative practice

We noted use of restorative practice in Middlesbrough's FFF service through interviews and observations at follow-up. For example, staff described working collaboratively alongside children and families, building trusting relationships, using language which was more restorative, and providing support in line with their preferences and needs. 'Doing with' (rather than 'to') families was demonstrated where



we observed staff discussing working together with parents to make decisions about a young person's healthcare, or maintain boundaries for a young person. We also noted through interviews and focus groups that listening to the young person's voice was a central part of the work done in FFF.

### Strengths-based and reflective practice

Staff discussed family or young person strengths across all the meetings we observed. Staff in focus groups also reported working in a strengths-based way, with families but also with staff. This was done by considering staff skills and strengths when allocating young people's cases or planning support.

FFF staff in follow-up focus groups reported using reflective supervision, thinking about where they are with their young people, what went well, what didn't go well and what next steps they might be able to try. We also observed use of reflective practice, for example discussion about family or family member's experiences and needs, or explanations for certain behaviours, to help inform intervention.

### Continuing use of Signs of Safety

It was noted by some staff that children's social care teams in Middlesbrough have moved away from the Signs of Safety practice model towards using restorative practice and the NWD Non-Negotiables and Provocations. However, some staff interviewed expressed confusion around the practice model, with some saying this is currently in use, others saying in partial use, and others saying this is not in use anymore. Follow-up interviews and observations indicated that some staff in Middlesbrough, within FFF as well as across children's

services, did continue to use certain elements of Signs of Safety. For example, each professional was asked to provide a scaling score, a key component in Signs of Safety practice, in both RAISE meetings we observed.

### Do young people engage with the development of their care and progression plans?

Engagement of young people with the development of their NWD/FFF plan was reported by 10 of 16 staff responding to the survey (63%). However, young people may not consistently be clear or fully involved in developing their plans or goals. One young person commented, in relation to their goals:

*"Yeah, I've seen a paper somewhere. I can't remember half the stuff."  
[Young person, follow-up interview].*

How do referrals, managing risk, decision making, care plans and support for young people and families operate in practice? Is this consistent with the logic model and how does this differ from previous ways of working?

### Referral pathways

Respondents in follow-up focus groups and interviews reported that referrals to the FFF service often came from the social worker but also from other services such as schools, the virtual school and Youth Offending Service (YOS). Referrals to Middlesbrough's FFF service were for a range of reasons, including preventing entry to care as well as supporting young people to return from residential care to live with their family or in foster care.



## Support for young people and families

Each young person in the service had a Safety Support Plan which incorporated the Non-Negotiables and Provocations being worked towards and identified the team members providing support. Deep Dives were used for some young people, where a group of professionals reviewed the whole case history for a young person in order to better understand the young person, their perspective, history and experiences, and to learn from that history to inform a plan for support and intervention.

Resource workers in the FFF service spent time building relationships with young people, supporting young people to develop daily routines, and to engage in activities and sports. FFF staff also supported young people with engaging in education, and had conversations with them about behaviour or addressing risk. FFF staff also supported parents or carers to implement daily routines and coping strategies. The multidisciplinary specialists supported other staff in the FFF service as well as providing support for young people directly. Support was also provided by other services such as support from the virtual school.

## Decision making and risk management

The FFF service offered a fast and flexible response to crises out of hours on evenings and weekends, such as families at risk of placement breakdown, or young people going missing. FFF staff were also trained to use de-escalation and diffusion techniques when needed.

*“We are able to support them sometimes in crisis. It could be things were going fine, then one night you receive a phone call from family and things are breaking down. But they do pick up the phone and ring you rather than police, where previously they might just contact the police.”*  
[FFF staff member, follow-up focus group]

The police roles were reported to use intelligence to help with understanding and monitoring levels of risk for young people, providing information about risks to support bespoke support such as missing plans.

*“Where children go missing, the police analyst is supporting really bespoke missing plans with some really good quality missing plans, where we are identifying locations, associates, that is supporting a kind of management of risk for children who are on the edge of care or are in care.”*  
[Senior leader, follow-up interview]

Staff discussed risks in the meetings we observed. RAISE meetings were focused around identifying and managing risk, sharing information, and informing the young person’s plan. Other types of team meetings provided opportunities for a more proactive approach to anticipating risk, such as development of skills to respond to challenging or potentially risky behaviour, and proactive planning to mitigate anticipated risks.

## Difference from previous ways of working

Outreach work was a new skill for some staff in FFF who had previously worked only in residential roles. It was also reported that the preventative and respite work the service was able to provide filled a gap in previous service provision, and that working more intensively and flexibly with families than existing services were able to do provided the opportunity to build relationships, get to know families’ needs better and offer more support. This included support





outside of usual working hours. Having a multidisciplinary team, including in-house access to a life coach (clinical psychologist) and communication support worker (speech and language therapist) was also a change. This change made these services more accessible and immediate for families.

*“When you become involved with a family, and you come in saying you want to help them, but then the interventions that you need for them, you’re stuck on a waiting list. By the time that you get to the front of the queue you’ve generally lost that family because the support hasn’t been there.”*

*FFF staff member, follow-up focus group]*

#### **How is information shared and used across partners and within Middlesbrough’s FFF service?**

We observed examples of close team working and information sharing within the multidisciplinary FFF service, as well as information sharing with social workers and with multi-agency partners. It was also reported that FFF staff worked closely with social workers, independent reviewing officers (IROs) and anyone else involved with a young person’s care. Close working relationships were also reported between the FFF head of service and other heads of service within children’s social care, as well as the director of children’s social care. There were also instances reported of good working relationships and communication with the virtual school head, who took part in deep dives and communicated regularly with the FFF service manager, as well as good working relationships and communication with partner agencies.

*“Going back to the deep dives. They’re multi-agency as well. So I think operationally, there’s really good reflective discussions that happen in those meetings where people all leave with a shared vision of what needs to happen, and it’s not just children’s social care [who have] taken on responsibilities for the next steps.”*

*[Service manager, follow-up focus group]*

#### **a: Is variation in implementation perceived by stakeholders to relate to outcomes, and which elements of the model are perceived to be central to its effectiveness?**

The skilled in-house multidisciplinary team was identified as central to the model’s effectiveness. This team offered support to families faster than it would be accessed through usual service. Another key element was the intensive, flexible and responsive nature of the service with professionals seeing young people regularly, responding quickly and being available out of usual working hours. Finally, listening to the young person’s voice and understanding their needs was reported as a further key element of the NWD model.

#### **A skilled in-house multidisciplinary team offering timely support**

The in-house multidisciplinary team, and their level of skill and training, was a key component of the model reported in focus groups and interviews at follow-up. This enabled support for young people and families to be informed by professionals with a range of different expertise. This led to more timely support for staff and families across areas of need such as mental health and speech and language in a way that was not possible in usual services.



*“I’ve been begging social workers for years to help me with my mental health and with [young person]’s and all I get is “we’ll put you on a list”, you know, to see a psychologist, and I’d be still waiting. But [key worker], she got someone there straightaway to assess me and [young person], and [I’ve] finally been diagnosed with something now, and [key worker]’s the one who got us the therapist.”*  
[Parent, follow-up interview]

### **An intensive, flexible and responsive service**

Staff highlighted the intensive and flexible nature of the support the FFF service was able to offer for young people, parents and carers. Young people and parents we spoke to reported regular contact and communication with the key workers from FFF, and with other professionals such as the life coach. Staff reported that this intensive and flexible approach was beneficial for building relationships, getting to know young people and families, understanding need and achieving progress more quickly than other services might be able to.

*“Because we’re so intensely involved, that constant one person and a whole team behind you, we do learn quite a bit. That’s why we can quickly, with everyone’s efforts, move things forward quite quickly for the family, and understand the needs and what they need, and put intervention in place.”*  
[FFF staff member, follow-up focus group].

The 24/7 nature of the FFF service, being accessible to young people, parents and carers outside of usual working hours, and responding quickly to crises on evenings

and weekends, was also reported to be a unique feature and a valued component of the service.

### **Listening to the young person’s voice and understanding need**

Using referrals, deep dives and working closely with families to understand their needs, particularly listening to the young person’s voice, was also reported as a key component of NWD in follow-up focus groups. In line with this, when asked what has been the best thing about working with the life coach or their key worker, one young person shared that they felt listened to by staff at FFF.

*“...staff haven’t [previously] listened and took things on board. Whereas in here you know they’ve taken things on board and follow-up of what they’ve said they were going to do”.*  
[Young person, follow-up interview]

### **b. What potential impacts of the intervention do stakeholders identify?**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Stakeholders in interviews, focus groups and observations identified that potential impacts of NWD include reducing risk and increasing safety for young people, reducing and preventing entry to care, improving reunification, reducing use of external residential care and out of area placements. There are also perceived cost savings of reducing the number of high cost external residential placements. Further, the model is thought to improve education and wellbeing. Through a multidisciplinary team, the model is thought to support holistic understanding of young people, and FFF staff are also thought to positively contribute to improving the quality of children’s social care plans, assessments and meetings.



One potential unintended consequence of introducing the NWD model was uncertainty from staff in other outreach services about what their own roles should be. This was mitigated by clear communication across Children's Services. Another potential unintended consequence for some young people was the disruption of transitioning out of the FFF service when they moved to another placement or the support from the service ended. We did not collect data on how prevalent these issues might be, but they highlight areas to be mindful of when implementing the model.

Administrative data is also presented which shows a number of indicators over the three months before and after NWD was introduced in Middlesbrough. This includes the numbers of children looked after, including numbers of residential and external placements, as well as the number of placement changes and duration looked after. However, due to the short time frame of evaluation, absence of a control group, and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that this should not be used as evidence of whether the model has had an impact.

### Indicators

#### Key LA level indicators pre and post introduction of NWD

Table 12 in Appendix A and Figures 6 and 7 show key LA level indicators pre and post introduction of NWD. These findings show some changes in these areas of children's social care intervention over time. However, these should not be taken to indicate evidence of impact of the model. This evaluation has not included a comparison group and is not designed to measure impact. It is also only observing these indicators over a short six month period of time, during which the intervention was implemented for just three months. Further, the introduction of the model also

took place at the same time as the global COVID-19 pandemic, which is also likely to have affected intervention and outcomes for children and young people. In summary, findings show that:

- The number of children looked after was 642 three months before the FFF service launched (June 2020). This had increased to 699 when the FFF service launched (September 2020) and decreased again to 660 three months later.
- The number of children and young people in residential placements was 74 three months before the FFF service launched (June 2020). This had increased to 80 when the FFF service launched (September 2020) and decreased again to 73 three months later.
- The number of children and young people in external residential placements was 64 three months before the FFF service launched (June 2020). This had increased to 70 when the FFF service launched (September 2020) and decreased again to 62 three months later.
- The average number of placement changes of children looked after in the last twelve months was 1.4 three months before the FFF service launched (June 2020). This remained stable when the FFF service launched (September 2020) and increased slightly to 1.5 three months later.
- The average duration children were looked after was 143 days three months before the FFF service launched (June 2020). This remained stable at 142 days when the FFF service launched (September 2020), but had increased to 236 days three months later.



Figure 6: Residential Placements Before and After the FFF service

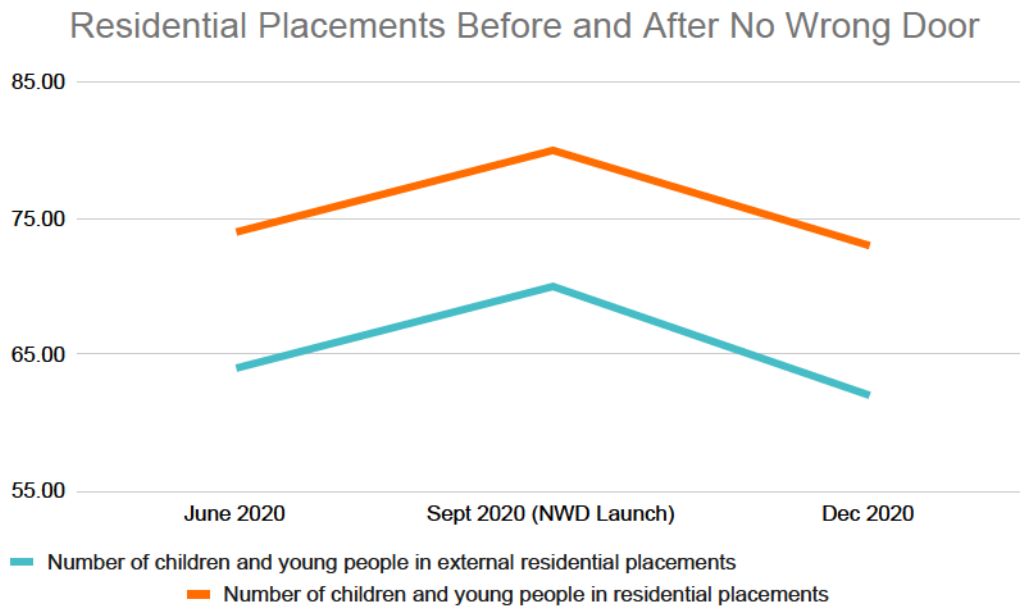
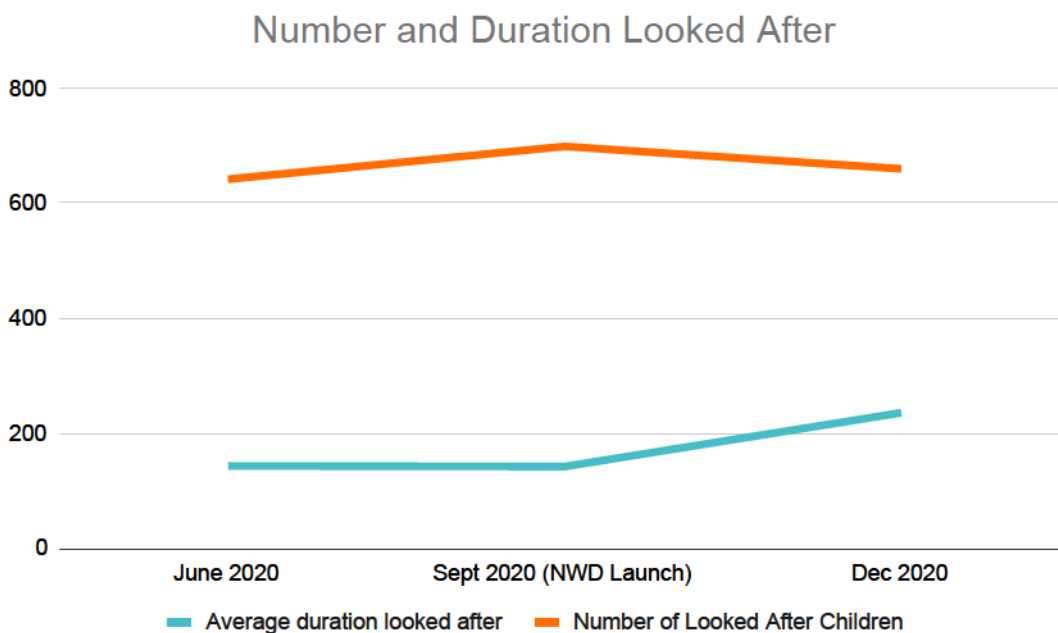


Figure 7: Number and Duration Looked After





### **Key NWD service level indicators at entry and exit to the FFF service**

Data on key indicators at entry and exit to the FFF service were only available for the six young people who were supported by and subsequently closed to the FFF service. These are therefore based on a very small number and so have been reported here qualitatively rather than quantitatively to avoid being misinterpreted. Findings show that some young people who had been looked after were no longer open to children's social care when they stopped working with the FFF service. Engagement in education, employment or training remained relatively stable between entry to and exit from the FFF service, with a mixture of young people who were in full time education, alternative provision or not in education, employment or training (NEET). Missing episodes were available for the twelve months prior to accessing the FFF service, and during the young person's support period with the FFF service, and so were not directly comparable. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), which is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire, were only available for two young people at entry to the FFF service, and were not available for any of the six young people at exit from the FFF service. These findings give us an idea about the characteristics of young people supported by the FFF service, but should not be taken to indicate evidence of impact of the model, as they are based on a small number of young people over a short period of time, and there is no comparison group.

### **To what extent and through what mechanisms is the intervention perceived to affect family engagement and outcomes?**

The survey found that 15 of 16 respondents (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that

the FFF service had improved outcomes for young people and families in Middlesbrough, and 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that NWD improves young person and family engagement with children's social care. Interpretation of these findings should take into consideration that this is perceived change, is not measured at the individual level, and has not been compared to a comparison group. Findings from interviews and focus groups in relation to perceived outcomes from the NWD model are summarised below.

### **Reduces risk or increases safety**

Staff reported that working with young people and their families was perceived to prevent escalation, build relationships, and reduce risk, or risky behaviours such as substance misuse, evidenced in some cases by de-escalation of support needed.

### **Children looked after**

Many FFF and children's social care staff reported that the service was contributing to a reduction in children looked after in Middlesbrough through children not coming into care, although it was acknowledged that FFF was not the only factor likely to have influenced this. Several staff also described how FFF's work with young people can lead to transitions home. Benefits for family relationships were also noted. One parent shared that they noticed a change in their child's behaviour, suggesting increased communication between them. Another parent interviewed shared how the support from FFF has led to them feeling more able to care for their child.



*“When you’ve got social work and things helping you, because I was so bad with [young person] I just wanted [young person] put in care to shock [them] more or less. But we’re getting through it now, [young person] has calmed a lot.” - [Parent, follow-up interview]*

A substantial shift in use of out of area placements in Middlesbrough was also noted. However, supporting return from external residential care was achieved in partnership with the Innovate Team, who would assess the appropriateness for a child or young person to move out of external residential care, before the FFF service would look at how to support that young person.

*“...I know there is a drive about bringing children back home because that’s where they should be and it’s the Innovation Team that’s worked alongside that. But I would say that the Future for Families have been instrumental in that. They have supported that initiative.” [Senior leader, follow-up interview]*

While emphasising that placement changes were made based on the best interests of children, a senior leader shared that there were substantial cost savings also resulting from reducing the use of external residential placements.

### **Other outcomes for children and young people**

Observations and interviews identified that the FFF service is thought to be improving a range of other outcomes for children and young people. This included the wellbeing of parents and young people as well as school attendance and engagement in education.

*“[Young person] wasn’t getting school work whatsoever, but now [they’ve] got a*

*home tutor, which I’m sure that was all down to [key worker] really, and [young person]’s quite happy doing the home tutoring.” - [Parent, follow-up interview]*

### **Improves quality of plans, assessments, and meetings**

In addition to creating perceived impact beyond the FFF service i.e. into the wider service of children’s social care, some staff have commented how the NWD approach supports a holistic understanding of young people, and that FFF staff can contribute to improving the quality of children’s social care plans, assessments, and meetings. For example:

*“They’re contributing positively to that multi-agency aspect of Care Plans because of the resource they bring from police and from SALT (speech and language therapy), and from psychology.” – [Senior leader, follow-up interview]*

### **c. Do there appear to be any unintended consequences or negative effects?**

#### **Impact on staff in other outreach services**

One unintended consequence was that some staff in other outreach services across children’s services felt unsure about their role, given the introduction of the NWD model. A senior member of staff reported that this was managed carefully with clear communication and this issue continues to be given consideration going forward, i.e. how to differentiate between the different outreach teams.

#### **Instability for young people**

Another unintended consequence identified by some staff was in relation to stability for young people. For example, a senior leader reported that where young people were settled in NWD placements it could be a



challenge in some cases to move them on. At baseline, staff identified that it would be important to communicate the temporary nature of the NWD residential placements to avoid it feeling like a further disruption to young people. Another staff member at follow-up commented on the instability experienced when there are changes in the young people a young person lives with in the hub. In another example, a social worker reported that there had been instances of abrupt endings to support provided by Middlesbrough's FFF service, which had not been received well by young people.

"For mine it's been quite an abrupt end for these kids who have already had quite a lot of rejection." [Social worker, follow-up focus group].

### 3. Readiness for Trial

#### a. Is there a clear description of the intervention and the contextual facilitators and barriers that would allow it to be implemented and evaluated in other places?

A revised logic model is presented in Appendix D outlining the intervention and its facilitators and barriers. This is simplified and adapted from the version presented in the pilot evaluation protocol (Sanders et al., 2019). The initial logic model developed at the outset of this pilot evaluation was largely supported by the findings in this report. However, there were certain elements that have been added based on these pilot findings.

#### Assumptions and contextual factors

Most contextual factors were already captured in the logic model. We added additional assumptions and contextual factors to emphasize the importance of receiving appropriate referrals, having

sufficient resource to meet local need (including a balance between outreach and hub roles) and clarity over how to integrate with local practice models such as Signs of Safety.

#### Intervention

The intervention itself was largely captured as described in the logic model. We added a note that some areas may tailor components such as the NWD Provocations to their local context.

#### Mechanisms

The logic model already captured one of the key mechanisms we observed, which was the skilled, in-house multidisciplinary team leading to more timely support and fewer referrals. In the logic model, where working with partners to identify and manage risks was already mentioned, we added that this includes holding RAISE meetings attended by multi-agency professionals. We also added that NWD care and progression plans can be informed by deep dives where these have taken place. While the flexible nature of support was already captured, we added the role of the intensive nature of the offer and ability to respond quickly and out of hours. Where the logic model already mentioned young people engaging with their care and progression plans, we emphasized the importance of listening to the young person's voice and staff developing a more holistic understanding of their needs.

#### Outcomes

This evaluation was not designed to test whether outcomes were achieved, but the potential outcomes identified in this pilot evaluation were largely already captured in the logic model. We added reference to the unintended consequences we identified which were not currently captured. The



unintended consequence we had originally included in the logic model, related to young people not entering care in the short term being at risk of developing more complex needs and entering care later if not sufficiently managed. This was not raised as a concern by staff and families we spoke to in this pilot evaluation, suggesting that Middlesbrough's FFF service was perceived to be providing the right support to keep these young peoples' needs met. This should continue to be monitored in future evaluation.

**b. Is the intervention able to be delivered consistently across teams?**

Social workers in follow-up focus groups identified that the support FFF offered differed at times depending on which young people they worked with. A social worker who worked with young people on the edge of care reported feeling that young people were offered support for as long as it was needed, whereas social workers who worked with young people who were in long term care reported that in some instances support ended more quickly for the young people they worked with.

**c. Are any changes needed to the theory, materials or procedures before rollout?**

Several staff have advocated for increasing capacity within Middlesbrough's FFF service, for example, through more posts and funding and the creation of another FFF hub or multiple hubs. It was also mentioned, by a senior manager, that an occupational therapist could be a good addition to the team to complement the communication support worker and the life coach. It was also important to create clarity around the criteria for young people who can stay in NWD placements, and those who can receive outreach support, so staff have a good understanding of who should

be referred and can make best use of the model. The length of placement with the NWD foster carer was also felt to be short in nature, e.g. three to four months, and some respondents noted that a longer placement may allow for further relationship building and work to take place. Also, there could be closer joint working between children's social care and the FFF service.

"...Middlesbrough's Social Services, Future for Families, supported lodgings. They all need to be making sure that they are all working together all the time. They do try, but sometimes the left hand doesn't tell the right hand what it's doing." [Foster carer, follow-up interview]







# DISCUSSION

## Discussion of Findings

Findings suggest that many elements of the No Wrong Door model are feasible to implement in a new local authority, even in the context of a global pandemic. Elements that were harder to implement included finding suitable foster care placements in some instances, and attendance of all appropriate multi-agency professionals at RAISE meetings. The model is also well received by staff and families, particularly the intensive and timely 24/7 support offered by a highly skilled multidisciplinary team. However, there is still further work to be done around clarifying the remit of the service for referring professionals, and balancing support for young people in hub placements with outreach support.

Although this evaluation is not designed to test impact, a range of potential benefits for children and families are identified, including preventing entry to care and reducing out of area placements. However, Middlesbrough employed several strategies to reduce their high numbers of children looked after and those who are in out of area placements, alongside implementing the NWD model. Therefore, future research must take into account all the strategies employed to support families living safely together and thus evaluate the model in its wider context.

Any conclusions drawn from this pilot evaluation should keep in mind the context in which NWD in Middlesbrough was being implemented and evaluated. This includes an overall 'inadequate' judgement from Ofsted in January 2020 which affected

timelines for introducing NWD. Some staff felt that this Ofsted judgement created the conditions to allow something new to come in and that the model therefore landed well with staff. This may have facilitated delivery in a way that may not occur in other areas without this context. Delivery of the NWD model in Middlesbrough was also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also important to note that this pilot evaluation is only able to capture the early stages of implementation, and cannot provide evidence on the longer term embedding of the NWD model. Nevertheless, there is some promising evidence that parts of the NWD model, for example the deep dive approach, and use of the Non-Negotiables, Provocations, and Distinguishers, have spread beyond the FFF service in Middlesbrough to wider children's social care teams. This evaluation does not include continued changes in Middlesbrough subsequent to the collection of data for this pilot evaluation. Implementation was also affected by factors including shortages in foster carers with suitable experience.

Although the context for each local authority introducing NWD will differ, findings from this pilot evaluation may be useful to inform refinement of training, materials and support provided by the intervention developer, as well as informing plans and activities undertaken by the local authorities who are introducing NWD themselves.

Refining support available from the intervention developer and adopting local authority, as well as overcoming



local and national barriers to successful implementation of NWD as intended by the model developers, will ensure that any impact evaluation is an evaluation of the true model, rather than a partial version of it. This would enable accurate conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of NWD. If the model is found to be effective, being able to deliver the model in a way that changes practice as intended will also be important to achieve optimal outcomes for children and families.

Quantitative evaluation would be needed to establish whether the mechanisms identified in this pilot evaluation are actually happening more in NWD than in practice as usual, as well as whether they are leading to actual impacts in the range of potential child and family outcomes that the model was reported to be likely to achieve.

## Limitations

Usual Social Work practice, as well as delivery of NWD were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This affects how much the findings from this pilot evaluation can be generalised in the future, although it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to affect children, families and Social Work practice for some time to come.

A formal rating of fidelity to NWD was out of scope of this evaluation, and findings are based on a small number of observations. This means concrete conclusions about whether the components of NWD are being fully implemented cannot be drawn.

Interpretation of findings should also consider that staff who chose to respond to the survey may not be representative of all staff in the FFF service. Although survey data was anonymous, responses may also have been affected by desirability effects,

such as reporting using a certain approach that they are expected to be using. Without a formal observation it is not possible to conclude whether or how much staff are actually using the intended approach, or the quality of implementation.

This evaluation aims to report on feasibility and promise of NWD in a new area, and gain understanding of its mechanisms. It is not able to and should not be used to draw conclusions about the impact of NWD. The stepped-wedge randomised controlled trial of NWD being undertaken by WWCS as part of the Department for Education's Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme is the next step in this evaluation process (Schoenwald et al., 2020). This project, now underway, aims to draw conclusions about the impact of NWD relative to a robust comparison.

While this evaluation aimed to inform the next phase of the NWD evaluation, delays in implementation and evaluation, including those linked to COVID-19, have meant that by the time this report is published, all local authorities in the SFPC programme will have begun implementing NWD. Findings from this pilot evaluation are still useful to inform the longer term embedding of NWD in these local authorities, as well as the next phase of evaluation. For example, through informing key elements to consider in the ongoing implementation and process evaluation. They are also of benefit to inform other authorities that may consider introducing NWD outside of the SFPC programme.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on findings of what worked well in Middlesbrough, as well as ways in which delivery could be improved, the following processes should receive particular attention when introducing and embedding NWD in a new area, to ensure successful implementation:

- Staffing of NWD teams should ensure capacity to respond to the needs of young people who are in placements and those who require outreach support. Staff should also have time to build meaningful and consistent relationships with families they work with and offer a slow withdrawal of support to avoid further disruption for young people. Dedicated staff for each type of role, or over-resourcing the service, may be ways to enable this. How consistency can be maintained when staff are not on shift should also be considered. Local authorities with a high level of need may need to consider investing in multiple NWD hubs or using the NWD approach across their wider residential offer.
- To support appropriate and sufficiently detailed referrals to the service, referring practitioners should be provided with comprehensive training and guidance, for example an e-learning package and refresher support as needed. This should ensure they have a good understanding of the NWD approach, the support it offers, who is suitable for the service, and how it differs from other local service provision. To facilitate the multi-agency approach to managing risk, services should also ensure that multi-agency partners receive appropriate guidance on the NWD model and are encouraged to attend RAISE meetings.
- To facilitate NWD to operate as intended, guidance for embedding the NWD Provocations, Distinguishers, and Non-Negotiables and achieving a consistent approach to practice across children's services should be available. This should include guidance on whether and how any existing practice models such as Signs of Safety should be used in conjunction with the model. This should ensure a consistent approach to decision making and support across children's social care, and continuity of support for children who are moving on from the NWD service. Any local adaptations to the Provocations, Distinguishers, and Non-Negotiables should be developed in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council to ensure these are in line with the NWD model.
- A sufficient supply of foster carers suitable to care for teenagers is important to enable young people to be supported to move into stable family based placements. This may be supported by early recruitment of the NWD specialist foster carer roles, also known as hub community families, and local authority wide recruitment and training of mainstream foster carers.
- Regular opportunities to revisit the NWD approach, and for the team to bond together are important to ensure the multidisciplinary NWD team are sufficiently well trained and supported. Later starters should also receive the training package, particularly training in restorative practice. Training needs of staff who may not have a background in children's social care should be considered.



## Directions for Future Research

Findings from this pilot evaluation can be used to understand how NWD is delivered in a new area, but cannot answer questions about the impact of NWD on outcomes. The next step to build on these findings is the stepped-wedge cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT), supplemented by a Difference-in Differences analysis, being led by WWCS (Schoenwald et al., 2020). This is being undertaken in four local authorities who are introducing NWD between 2020 and 2022. All four local authorities have now begun delivering a NWD service. This evaluation will follow these local authorities over time to consider the impact of NWD on the likelihood of children being looked after. Secondary outcomes this evaluation will also be measuring are the number of days in care, the number of placement changes, and likelihood of being not in education, employment or training (NEET). This impact evaluation will be accompanied by an Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) seeking to measure implementation to help understand and explain any identified intervention effects (or lack thereof) in the concurrent stepped-wedge cluster randomised controlled trial, and continue to improve understanding of the model.

This next stage will take into account key learning from this pilot evaluation about the availability of data and what components and mechanisms to measure. For example, the next phase of the evaluation should consider what local adaptations are made such as to the Provocations, and how NWD and existing local practice models are integrated. The Implementation and Process Evaluation should also seek to measure whether risks and challenges identified in this pilot, such as the effects of COVID-19 availability of foster care placements, and clarity over referrals to the

NWD service, are overcome in the local authorities participating in the trial. This will have important implications for interpreting the impact findings and whether an effect, or absence of effect, might be attributed to differential implementation rather than the NWD model as specified. It will also be possible to consider whether mechanisms operate similarly in different local authority contexts, and whether components of NWD were already in place before the model was introduced. Future evaluation should also monitor for any potential unintended consequences of the model identified in the original logic model and within this pilot.

Future research may also consider further testing of the logic model. This may include whether the mechanisms of NWD can be measured quantitatively and establishing the key active ingredients and mediators of the model.





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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Tables

Table 2: Characteristics of young people being supported by NWD

	NWD launch (07/09/2020)	Three months after NWD launch (07/12/2020)
Young people in NWD placements	0	5 (3 full time, 2 respite)
Young people being supported by outreach	14	40
Average age	14.07	14.42
Male	7 (50%)	26 (58)%
Female	7 (50%)	19 (42)%
White British	12 (86%)	38 (84%)
Not White British <sup>7</sup>	2 (14%)	7 (16%)
Average number of changes in key worker	0	0
Average frequency of young people's case review by NWD staff	N/A	At least monthly
Average number of days from referral to NWD to opening young person's case	N/A	Referral to intervention - 23 <sup>8</sup> Allocation to intervention - 16
<b>Statutory status</b>		
Child in Need	0	6 (13%)
Child Protection	0	13 (28%)
Looked After Child	11 (79%)	26 (57%)
Other e.g. Pre-Proceedings	3 (21%)	0

7 Cell sizes too small to report more detailed breakdown (includes Asian / Asian British, Black / Black British, Gypsy / Roma, Mixed and Other Ethnic Group)

8 Most of the young people that have come into the NWD placements start as an outreach case and progress to requiring support through placements, in these instances they are not logged as an additional referral for the NWD service.



Placement type		
With Family or Connected Person	3 (21%)	24 (53%)
Foster Care	9 (64%)	9 (20%)
Residential Care	2 (14%)	6 (13%)
NWD Hub Residential Care	0	3 (7%)
NWD Foster Carer	0	1 (2%)
Supported accommodation or lodgings	0	2 (4%)
Type of (direct) specialist support being received		
Life Coach	0	7 (16%)
Communication Support Worker	1 (7%)	10 (22%)
Police Liaison Officer	0	11 (24%)

**Table 3: Experience of NWD**

	How would you rate your experience of NWD (Futures for Families) so far?
Very positive	2 (13%)
Positive	11 (69%)
Neither positive nor negative	3 (19%)
Negative	0
Very Negative	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 4: Satisfaction with training**

	How satisfied or dissatisfied do you feel by the information and training on NWD (Futures for Families)?
Very positive	7 (44%)
Positive	9 (56%)
Neither positive nor negative	0
Negative	0
Very Negative	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>



**Table 5: Job satisfaction, buy in and confidence**

	I feel satisfied in my job	I think there is sufficient buy in from leadership for NWD (Futures for Families)	I feel confident using the NWD (Futures for Families) model
Strongly agree	4 (25%)	4 (25%)	4 (25%)
Agree	9 (56%)	11 (69%)	10 (63%)
Neither agree nor disagree	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)
Disagree	1 (6%)	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 6: Staff time for NWD and work with parents or carers**

	I have enough time to take full advantage of the NWD (Futures for Families) model	I have enough time for direct work with the young people allocated to me	I have enough time for direct work with the parents / carers allocated to me
Strongly agree	0	1 (8%)	1 (9%)
Agree	9 (56%)	8 (67%)	6 (54%)
Neither agree nor disagree	3 (19%)	2 (17%)	3 (27%)
Disagree	4 (25%)	1 (8%)	1 (9%)
Strongly disagree	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>





**Table 7: Attending restorative training**

	I have been trained in a restorative, strengths-based approach
Yes, I attended all training	7 (58%)
Yes, I attended some training	4 (33%)
I'm not sure I received it	1 (8%)
No	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

**Table 8: Young person engagement with plans**

	I have been trained in a restorative, strengths-based approach
Strongly agree	0
Agree	10 (63%)
Neither agree nor disagree	6 (38%)
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 9: Perceived outcomes**

	NWD (Futures for Families) ...	
	NWD launch (07/09/2020)	Three months after NWD launch (07/12/2020)
Young people in NWD placements	5 (31%)	4 (25%)
Young people being supported by outreach	10 (63%)	12 (75%)
Average age	1 (6%)	0
Male	0	0
Female	0	0
<b>White British</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>



**Table 10: Case review frequency**

	How often are the cases you hold reviewed?
Once a week	3
Once a month	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

**Table 11: Likelihood to stay in current role**

	How likely are you to stay in the NWD (Futures for Families) team in the next 12 months?
Very likely	9
Likely	6
Neither likely nor unlikely	1
Unlikely	0
Very unlikely	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>

**Table 12: LA level indicators pre and post introduction of NWD**

	Three months before NWD launch (June 2020)	NWD launch (Sept 2020)	Three months after NWD launch (Dec 2020)
Number of Looked After Children	642	699	660
Number of children and young people in residential placements <sup>9</sup>	74	80	73
Number of children and young people in external residential placements	64	70	62
Average number of placement changes of Children Looked After in the last twelve months	1.4	1.4	1.47
Average duration looked after	143	142	235.55

9 Not including Secure Residential or Mother and Baby Residential placements



## Appendix B: Required training for staff<sup>10</sup>

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) training	Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) and the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England)
Anti-bullying	Ligature knives
Attachment theory	Medication
Autism awareness	Medication observations
Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	Mental health awareness
Child development	Modern slavery
Child sexual exploitation	Moving and handling
Communicating with young people	Neglect
Communication support	NWD
Complaints	Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)	Online radicalisation
County lines	PLACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)
DBT Inform Skills (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy)	PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act)
DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy)	PACE (Parents Against Child Exploitation)
Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs)	Parental conflict
Epilepsy	Personal safety
Equality and diversity	Prevent (Cleveland Police)
Family network training	Protecting Rights in Care Environments (PRICE)
FGM	Report writing
Fire awareness	Restorative practice
First aid	Safeguarding
Food hygiene	Self-harm
Gaming and gambling	Social Care Common Inspections Framework (SCCIF)
GDPR	Solihull (parenting)
General risk assessment	Solution focused
Health and safety	Talking teens
Honor based violence	Trauma impact and recovery
Infection control	
Learning disability awareness	



## Appendix C: NWD Distinguishers, Provocations and Non-Negotiables

### North Yorkshire County Council's Ten NWD Distinguishers

The observable practices, features, behaviours and practical elements of the operating model that make NWD distinctively different from traditional services & ensure NWD stays true to its vision & aims.

1. Always progressing to permanence within a family or community
2. High stickability of the key worker
3. Fewer referrals, less stigma
4. Robust training strategy (e.g. restorative practice and therapeutic support)
5. No heads on beds culture
6. No appointment assessments
7. A core offer to all young people
8. Multi-agency intelligence led approach to reduce risk
9. Close partnership working
10. Young people's aspirations drive practice

### North Yorkshire County Council's Eight NWD Non-Negotiables

Essential values, principles and ways of working together without which a model ceases to be faithful to the NWD approach

1. High standards and ambitions for all young people
2. Residential care as a short term intervention not long term solution
3. Commitment to do whatever it takes to support young people within their community (no out of area placements)
4. Forward looking and aspirational
5. A belief in young people and their right to a family
6. A commitment and investment in staff support and being rigorous about holding them to account (high support, high challenge)
7. Unconventional and flexible workforce, use of creative sessional contracts to respond quickly
8. Bring young people into NWD quickly but move them out slowly



### **North Yorkshire County Council's Four Provocations of No Wrong Door**

1. Would this be good enough for my child?
2. Are we managing risk for the child or for the organisation?
3. What kind of adult do we want them to be at 25? 35? 50?
4. Is there a shared approach to parenting?

### **Middlesbrough's locally tailored Provocations**

- As a parent, would I be happy with this for my child?
- Where do we see the young person in 6 months, 1 year, 2 years?
- Would we say this, to the child?
- Are we managing the risk for the child or for us?

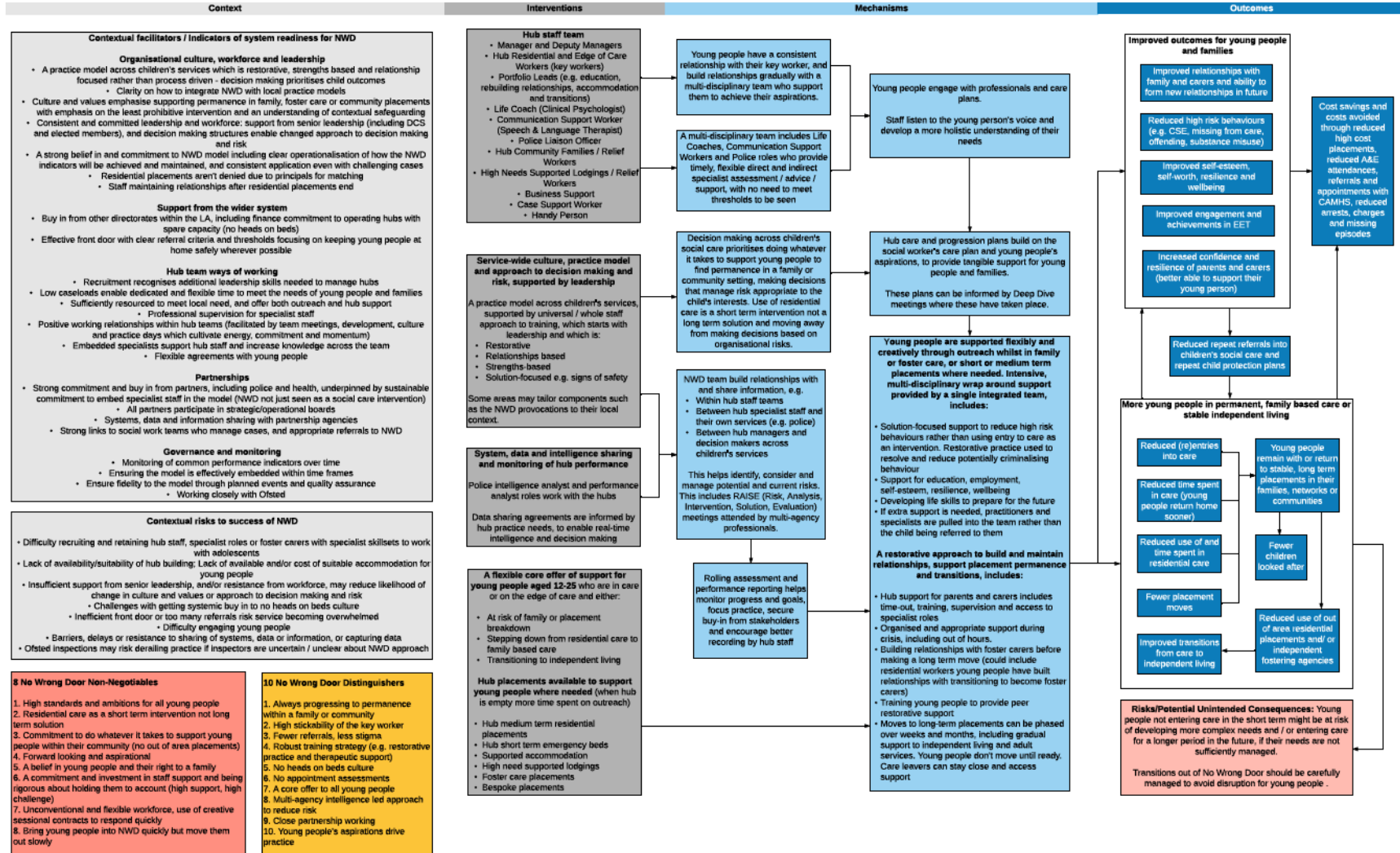
### **Middlesbrough's locally tailored Non-Negotiables**

- Working with partners, sharing the risk and supporting each other to take risks!
- Having those difficult conversations!
- Working together to meet the needs and outcomes of young people!
- Having the right staff members with attitude and skills in place to make that difference!
- The voice of the child at the centre of their journey!
- A whole family approach!
- Team around the child training strategy!
- Always working to permanence for the child!
- Every child can be fostered!



# Appendix D: Revised Logic Model

Logic Model North Yorkshire No Wrong Door





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# No Wrong Door Pilot Evaluation

**Aim:** To study rollout of NWD in a local authority outside of where it was developed, whether it can be delivered, what are the challenges, what do staff and families think.

The study is not designed to understand whether No Wrong Door makes a difference to outcomes. This is the question we will ask in the next phase of our evaluation.

**What we did:** Before and six months after FFF opened, we carried out **Interviews and Focus Groups** with staff and families, a **staff survey**, and **observations** of meetings in the FFF service. We also collected **data** about recruitment, training and young people supported by the service.

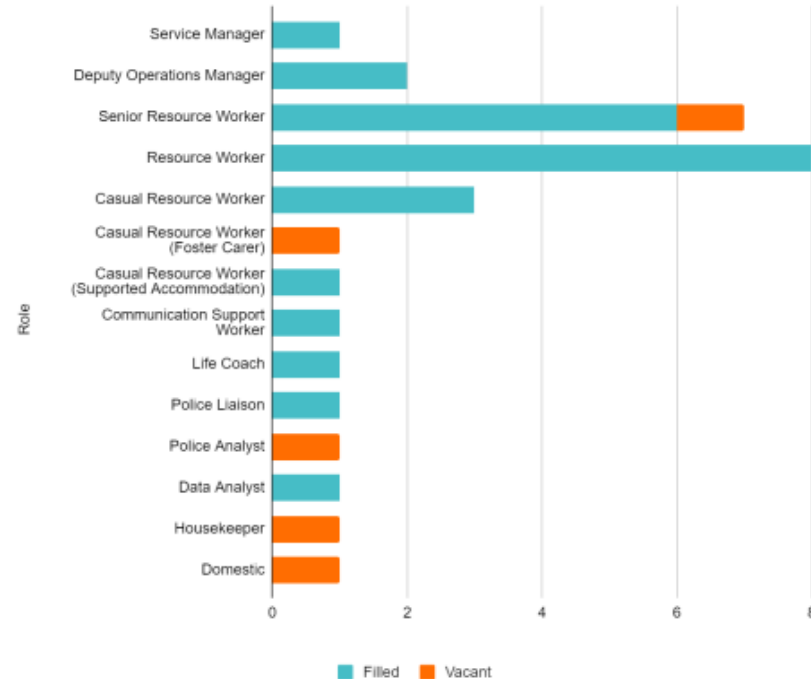


# Findings: How was No Wrong Door implemented in the Middlesbrough Futures for Families service?

- Provision of intended **placement types** and **recruitment** of almost all intended staff
- Staff received comprehensive **training** and regular development days
- Staff observed to work **restoratively** (doing 'with' rather than 'to' or 'for'), making decisions with families, listening to young people's **voice and aspirations** to drive practice. Families strengths were also highlighted.
- Support offered was **flexible, creative and tailored**
- The provocations, non-negotiables, paperwork and processes were tailored to Middlesbrough's **local context and priorities**, in partnership with NYCC
- **Age range** adapted to 11-18 in Middlesbrough

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Recruitment by No Wrong Door launch (Sept 2020)



# Findings: What were some of the challenges?

- Most FFF staff (88%) reported feeling confident to use the model, but only 56% of staff reported feeling they had enough **time to take full advantage** of the model
- Competing demands between the **outreach and residential work** was one area of challenge
- Some confusion over **whether to continue to use Signs of Safety** and some uncertainty over **referral criteria**
- It was sometimes hard to find a **suitable local foster care placement**
- Changes in keyworker due to staff **turnover**, and transitioning out of the FFF service needed to be carefully managed to **avoid further disruption**

*“Another young person couldn’t get as much outreach support as they might have done because of the demands of caring for that young person who was in the hub.” – [Senior leader]*

*“...we seem to be getting residential cases in emergencies for extended periods of time that would normally not be a part of NWD due to not meeting the criteria.” – [FFF staff member]*

*“The key worker said I’m here for you, I’m going to support you. You’re moving to [foster carer] and then moving from here, and then she moved on from her job, which was quite a let-down for the young person.” [Foster carer]*

*“For mine, it’s been quite an abrupt end for these kids who have already had quite a lot of rejection.” [Social worker].*



# Findings: What did staff and families think about the model?

- Most staff felt **positive** about the model and the training. The **life coach** and **communication support worker** were particularly seen as helpful, and overcame external waiting lists. The **police analyst** was also beneficial to address issues such as missing episodes.

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There appeared to be a high level of **support for the model from senior management and leadership**, and staff reported **good relationships with partners and social work teams**

- Providing a **flexible** service, accessible **outside of usual working hours**, and responding quickly to crises on evenings and weekends, was a unique and valued feature for families. Some young people who had previous lack of trust in adults developed **positive relationships** with FFF staff.
- Staff changes and COVID-19 could be **barriers to engaging** some young people, and not all young people were clear about their plan or goals.

- Staff and families identified that NWD had the **potential** to improve the quality of support, reduce risk and increase safety, and improve outcomes for young people.

*“Well [young person] can talk to her so there must be something there because [young person] doesn’t talk to anybody. [Young person] tells [key worker] more things than [young person] actually tells me.” [Parent]*

*“He engaged well with the outreach worker at the initial visit. Was really keen, and again I think there was a gap in revisiting that young person. Again you know, a three week gap, so he lost interest.” [Social worker]*

@whatworksCSC

# What are our recommendations?

Our report is available on our [website](#), and a summary is in the SFPC [newsletter](#).

Recommendations include:

- The importance of ensuring staffing capacity for placements **and** outreach support
- Clear **guidance on using NWD alongside any existing practice model**, as well as comprehensive training and guidance for **partners** and **referring practitioners**
- Based on good practice in FFF, we recommend **regular opportunities for NWD teams to revisit the NWD principles** (the non-negotiables, distinguishers and provocations)

Our next steps

- A podcast about the findings
- Evaluating the impact of No Wrong Door on the likelihood of children and young people becoming looked after, placement length and changes, education and employment
- This is in Rochdale, Norfolk, Warrington, Redcar & Cleveland.



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## Overview report for Corporate Parenting Board

### Private Fostering

30 March 2022

#### **Purpose of this report**

The local authority is required to prepare an annual report in relation to children identified as being privately fostered and in relation to its activity in relation to the private fostering standards.

The annual report has been through its approval process with its governance sitting under the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership on 21 June 2021. A copy of that report is appended for Board's oversight.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the Corporate Parenting Board to explain what private fostering is, and to provide an overview of activity in relation to provide fostering so far in the 21/22 year.

#### **What is private fostering?**

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

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

Children who are privately fostered are **not** looked after children but are supported under Section 17 as Children in Need.

#### **The context**

as of 29/12/21 Middlesbrough support

- 1446 children through Child In Need
- 420 children who have a child protection plan
- 513 children who we look after
- **4 children privately fostered!**

#### **The challenge**

All local authorities across England have challenges in relation to the reporting of private fostering arrangements within their areas and it is therefore likely that there are arrangements in place which are not recognised within communities or by professionals and are not therefore reported.

We have therefore focused on awareness raising activity across the area, in conjunction with Redcar. This includes:

- Social media awareness – Twitter, LinkedIn, Middlesbrough Children Matters, etc. on a regular basis.
- New poster campaign – schools briefed via Designated Safeguarding Lead forum and through the Safeguarding Information Officer
- Private Fostering Steering Group members have been sending the message out within their own organisations – police and health

What we need to do next

- Support to reach out across Middlesbrough's diverse communities – how can Members help?

B Short

29.12.21



Appendix 1 – Annual Private Fostering report



Safeguarding & Children's Care

**Annual report on Private Fostering**

**for 2020/21**

Report Prepared by Ben Short

Head of Safeguarding and Care Planning

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## **Definition of a Private Fostering Arrangement**

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

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

## **Regulatory Context**

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

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

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

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

## **Impact on Local Authorities**

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

The National Minimum Standards specify a minimum standard for local authority practice in the fulfilment of Children Act duties and functions in relation to private fostering. They, along with the measures in section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the 2005 regulations, are intended to better focus local authorities' attention on private fostering, in part by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

## **Local Procedures**

Middlesbrough Children's Services hold their local policy and procedures on TriX and can be located at [https://www.proceduresonline.com/middlesbrough/cs/p\\_private\\_fost.html#](https://www.proceduresonline.com/middlesbrough/cs/p_private_fost.html#)

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

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

## **Middlesbrough's Private Fostering Arrangement Overview**

Data recorded in the PF1 Statutory Report on L Liquid Logic 20/21 is detailed in the table below.

	17 / 18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Number of new notifications	3	6	6	4
Number of new Private Fostering arrangements that started in the year	3	6	6	4
Number of arrangements ending in the year	2	2	7	3
Number of Private Fostering arrangements still in place at the end of march each year	2	6	5	6

The number of private fostering arrangements within Middlesbrough remains low and this remains a significant area for development. A joint STSCP awareness raising campaign will be presented alongside this paper, to raise both community and partner awareness of private fostering.

During the reporting year 20/21 4 new notifications for private fostering were received with an average age of 12 ½.

At the end of the year, 6 private fostering arrangements continued to be in place consisting of 5 biologically female and 1 male young person, as follows:

Child	ID	Start Date	Date of birth	Biologically assigned gender/ sex
1	476449	31/10/2019	1-10-05	F
2	492199	01/04/2019	6-4-06	M
3	596310	23/03/2021	16-10-08	F
4	598885	12/09/2017	5-11-05	F
5	676619	23/11/2020	3-2-14	F
6	834105	23/02/2021	19-11-05	F

#### 476449

A private fostering arrangement for a 15 year old female child which has been in place for 18 months at the time of writing the report. This is a very settled placement which is regularly reviewed and where the young person is seen by her social worker regularly.

#### 492199

15 year old male child who is living with friends of the family following have frequent fall outs at home. He is very settled where lives and has regular family time with his mother and siblings. The carer is considering a Child Arrangements Order.

#### 596310

This is a 12 year old female child who is living with a cousin following the passing of her grandmother with whom she had lived under a Child Arrangements Order. The care received is described as excellent and responsive to her needs. This is a new arrangement made in March 2021.

#### 598885

15 year old female child who is living with family friends and has done so for a very long time, reportedly since she was a toddler but formally under a private fostering arrangement in Middlesbrough for over 3 years. She turns 16 this year and it may have been possible to have secured a Child Arrangement Order before this point.

#### 676619

A 7 year old female child who is living with close family friends following the death of her mother late last year. There are ongoing discussions about the potential support

to apply for a private law order for such a young child. The arrangement is supported by the child's father and through a positive assessment.

834105

15 year old child identifying as male lived with family friends. This follows a family discussion that he would live with family. The assessment is ongoing at this time but appears to be positive and will be further reviewed at gateway once the assessment is finalised and if approved by the Head of Service.

### **Persons disqualified from private fostering**

No prohibitions have been issued during the 20/21 year.

### **National Minimum Standards Middlesbrough Compliance**

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

This section of the report will consider the local authority's compliance with the minimum standards during the course of 20/21 and will provide a summary of the work that has been undertaken in relation to each minimum standard.

#### Standard 1 – Statement on Private Fostering

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

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

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

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

## Standard 2 - Notification

### **The local authority;**

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

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

Information recorded within the PF1 annual report to the Government (available on LCS) identified that the Local Authority received 4 new notifications in 20/21

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

## Standard 3 – Safeguarding & Promoting Welfare

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

Upon receipt of a notification, whether in accordance with regulation 3, 5 or 6, for the purposes of discharging its duty under section 67(1) of the Act (welfare of privately fostered

children) the local authority must make arrangements to visit the proposed arrangement within 7 working days to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## Standard 5

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

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

## Standard 6

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

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

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

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

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

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

Private Fostering arrangements within Middlesbrough in 20/21 are presented to the Head of service for ratification. An annual review of arrangements takes place through the local authority legal gateway who receive an updating report from the social worker who also presents the case to panel.

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

### **Developments for 20/21**

The action plan focuses on the following areas:-

- Ensure that there is a targeted awareness raising and training in private fostering and that this is regularly re-communicated to the workforce and the community. This is an action carried forward by agreement at STSCP. A joint campaign will take place between Middlesbrough and R&C
  - Through the Safeguarding Partnership – by Head of Service
  - By July 21
  
- Hold the annual review of private fostering arrangements
  - Head of Service, Team Manager and social work teams
  - This has taken place and a further review will take place in 6 months for newly made private fostering arrangements
  - October 21
  
- Hold the private fostering steering group in a ¼ basis going forward
  - Head of Service with representatives across the partnership
  
- Consider the introduction of a private fostering worker in the fostering service. Carried forward from previous year due to review of fostering service by Partners in Practice.
  - Head of Future for Families
  - By end of financial year.

April 21

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**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL  
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**



<b>Report of:</b>	<i>Executive Director of Children’s Services</i>
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board- 30 March 2022</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<i>Complaints made by children looked after.</i>
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<b>Contribution to the guiding principles of the Corporate Parenting Strategy</b>
<b>Your Home- NA</b>
<b>Your Family and Friends- NA</b>
<b>Your Education- NA</b>
<b>Your Adult Life- NA</b>
<b>Your Health and wellbeing- NA</b>
<b>Your Voice and Influence- NA</b>

**Is the report confidential or does it contain exempt information?**

No

**What is the purpose of this report?**

To provide information to the Corporate Parenting Board on the number of complaints made by children looked after between September 2021 – February 2022.

**Report Background**

N/A

**Appendices**

The report is attached as an appendix.

**Recommendations**

That the Corporate Parenting Board note the report.

**Why is this being recommended?**

NA

**Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

NA

**Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

NA

***Legal***

NA

***Financial***

N/A

***Policy Framework***

N/A

***Equality and Diversity***

N/A

***Risk***

N/A

**Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

N/A

**Background papers**

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

**Contact:** Siobhan Davies  
**Email:** Siobhan\_davies@middlesbrough.gov.uk

## **Statistical Overview**

72 complaints were raised between September 2021 and February 2022.

14 of these were in relation to children in our care

- 9 were not upheld
- 3 are being investigated
- 2 were upheld
- 1 partially upheld

Of those partially or fully upheld, 2 were open to Safeguarding Care Planning Teams and 1 CLA Services

All complaints received for children in our care, in the past 6-months, were completed within timescales

1 ongoing complaint is overdue (623963)

All 3 upheld/partially upheld complaints were made by parents/guardians

All 3 complaints were resolved at Stage 1

### **Issues of complaint:**

#### **Complaint 1 (upheld)**

- High number of moves for a child which caused behavior deteriorating rapidly.
- Carer did not provide appropriate kit/uniform for starting school

#### **Complaint 2 (upheld)**

- Connected Carers allowance reduced without agreement

#### **Complaint 3 (Partially upheld)**

- Family time not taking place as agreed in Court
- Communication with the allocated worker, no response to calls or emails or invite to CLA review

### **Stage 2 and 3 Complaints Resolved in the past 6-months**

2 Stage 2 complaints have concluded within the past 6-months, relating to children in our care

#### **Complaint 1:**

- Concerns around comments made by a Social Worker deemed 'inappropriate' and providing conflicting information.
- Gap in visits taking place
- Delay in rehabilitation

#### **Complaint 2:**

- Not providing a copy of minutes from statutory meeting s

- Not sharing information with another service in a timely way, which caused delay in starting an assessment. However, this was partially upheld as other factors played a part in this.

### **Learning from Complaints**

The numbers of complaints in relation to children in our care is low, therefore drawing themes and learning from these alone is not possible. However, when comparing overall themes from complaints 2018-21 and lessons learned, the themes from that report are;

- Poor communication from a social worker;
- Perceived lack of financial support for a child or young person; and
- Accuracy of recorded information about a customer.

Each Month the Children & Families Principal Social Worker chairs a Learning Meeting

The purpose of the Learning Meeting

- To pull together and analyse learning from practice. There will be a focus on learning from complaints, thematic overview of IRO challenge/audit, and audit to excellence findings, Future for Families Deep Dives and any reviews ongoing within the South Tees Safeguarding Partnership, Subject Access Requests and Participation People to represent the voice of children in care. The Organisational Development's business partner for Children's Services will attend to consider what training has taken place.
- To ensure that where there are themes emerging about quality of practice that we can be responsive and target resource (such as training, practice lead interventions and audit) to support social work practice to flourish.
- To assess impact of those interventions and consider whether there is any evidence of the quality of practice improving, month on month, against the priorities where intervention has been targeted.
- The group will identify 1 key priority for each month which will result in targeted Hot Topics session, PSW and Practice Lead support for the month ahead. The recommendation will be sent to Rachel Farnham, Director for approval.

### **Action undertaken in response to complaints from September 2021 – February 2022:**

- Audit undertaken whereby children have made complaints
- Mystery Shopper quality assurance piloted in MACH
- Hot Topics
- Practice Week with a focus on language, communication and identity.
- Participation People now attend and contribute to Learning Meetings ensuring we can respond to issues raised directly from children and young people in our care



**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL  
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**



<b>Report of:</b>	Kathy Peacock - Participation People
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Corporate Parenting Board- 30.3.22
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<b>Subject:</b>	Your Voice and Influence
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<b>Contribution to the guiding principles of the Corporate Parenting Strategy</b>
<b>Your Home</b>
<b>Your Family and Friends</b>
<b>Your Education</b>
<b>Your Adult Life</b>
<b>Your Health and wellbeing</b>
<b>Your Voice and Influence - Yes</b>

**Is the report confidential or does it contain exempt information?**

No

**What is the purpose of this report?**

To update the Corporate Parents on Youth Voice activities that have taken place and being proposed.

**Report Background**

Please refer to Appendix 1

**Appendices**

Please refer to Appendix 1

**Recommendations**

Information only

**Why is this being recommended?**

N/A

**Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

N/A

**Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

N/A

***Legal***

N/A

**Financial**

N/A

**Policy Framework**

N/A

**Equality and Diversity**

N/A

**Risk**

N/A

**Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

N/A

**Background papers**

Body	Report title	Date
Corporate Parenting Board	Participation Youth Voice Update	15.2.2022

**Contact:** [Kathy Peacock - 07926580007](tel:07926580007)  
**Email:** [Kathy.peacock@participationpeople.com](mailto:Kathy.peacock@participationpeople.com)

# Middlesbrough Participation

## #YouthVoice Update

### March 2022

Participation People facilitate open, safe, and inclusive spaces with these #YouthVoice weekly forums. Each group co-creates fun and engaging opportunities for their peers and decision-makers (like you!) to get involved in service improvement activities, campaigns and events.



Middlesbrough Children in Care Council - a group for care experienced young people between the ages of 10-17 years



Middlesbrough Care Leavers Forum - a group for care experienced young adults between the ages of 18 -25 years



# #YouthVoice Update

## March 2022



Children In Care Council (currently six members) has

- Designed, delivered a celebration/fun event - 24th February. Six young people attended. We got to know each other, played games and a music tutor delivered a session and they got to write and sing their own song.
- Worked on what they want when they get a new social worker.
- Working on what they need to reach their education, training and employment goals.
- Worked on what questions should be included within the 'Your Voice' Survey.
- Three members of the group went on a Participation People organised residential to Doncaster, joining young people from Hounslow, Wandsworth and Greenwich. Everyone had an amazing time, made new friends, learnt new skills and heard about the great things all the areas are working on.
- Had a virtual meeting with the Children's Commissioner Office to help them understand what care experienced young people want from their 'Help at Hand' website.
- Wrote some questions to ask Corporate Parents.
- Designing a fun engagement event that will take place in April.

# #YouthVoice Update

## March 2022



### Care Leavers Forum (Currently five members)

- All members came to Care Leavers Celebration event on the 23rd February.
- Worked on what they want when they get a new social worker.
- Working on what they need to reach their education, training and employment goals.
- Worked on what questions should be included within the 'Your Voice' Survey.
- Had a meeting with the Corporate Parents telling them their life story of growing up in Middlesbrough.
- Had a virtual meeting with the Children's Commissioner Office to help them understand what care experienced young people want from their 'Help at Hand' website.
- Wrote some questions to put to Corporate Parents.
- Delivered a session during Social Work Practice week on 'Language that Cares.'

# #YouthVoice Update

## March 2022

The Participation People team have:-

- Regular weekly meetings with the CiCC and CLF
- Attended the Designated Teacher Conference, ran a workshop on Neuro Diversity and had a stall at the Market place to promote participation
- Co delivered the Care Leavers Celebration event, promoting the Care Leavers Forum throughout
- Designed and ran a session to all delegates at the Parent's 4 Change Conference on Co-Production
- Co produced and will deliver sessions at the SEND Youth Voice Conference 21 - 23rd March
- Met with the Foster Care Association to discuss collaborating to put on fun engagement events throughout the year
- Used the information gained from the CiCC and CLF and created the 'Your Voice Survey - Now LIVE



<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/9bdd3e56cb1f4909a30847361a3915de>

# Our 2022 Plan

Below is a brief snapshot of everything we have planned for your care experienced youth voice forums 2022...





## Your Middlesbrough #YouthVoice Team

We have an amazing team of professionals who facilitate these groups and ensure young people are having FUN!

### Participation People- Who are we?

#### Our Middlesbrough Team

 Antonia - CEO	 Hannah - Programme Manager	 Laurie Youth Council and Young Champions Lead	 Fred Support Youth Council (Contractor)
 Xavier - In Care Councils	 Kathy - In Care Councils	 Ed - Young Researcher Lead	 Alice - Young Researcher Lead

## CONTACT

Contact [HannahW@participationpeople.com](mailto:HannahW@participationpeople.com) ...for more information on Middlesbrough's #YouthVoice activities, campaigns, projects, and events. We would LOVE to hear from you!



@ParticipationPP  
@ParticipationPeople

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